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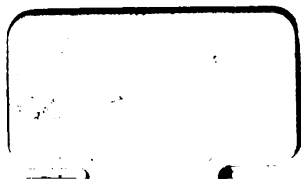
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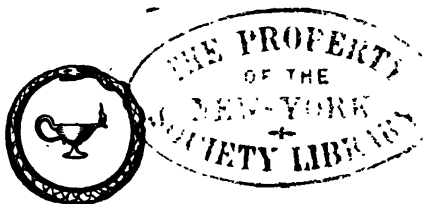
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HAGAR: A STORY OF TO-DAY.

HAGAR,
A STORY OF TO-DAY.

Carey
BY ALICE CAREY,

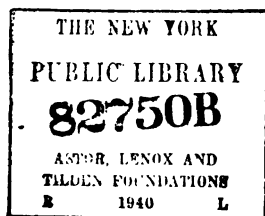
AUTHOR OF
"CLOVERNOOK, OR RECOLLECTIONS OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE WEST"
"LYRA, AND OTHER POEMS," ETC.,
AND ONE OF THE AUTHORS OF
"POEMS BY ALICE AND PHOEBE CAREY."



K.

REDFIELD,
CLINTON HALL, NEW YORK.

1852.
60



ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the Year One Thousand
Eight Hundred and Fifty-two, by J. S. REDFIELD, in the Clerk's
Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern
District of New York:

STEREOTYPED BY
A. CUNNINGHAM,
183 William-st., N. Y.

P R E F A C E.

THE principal incident in this too hastily and carelessly written story will be recognized in Clovernook as founded on a tradition once familiar in that neighborhood, but the characters are for the most part sketched in my poor way from originals I have met elsewhere, and their conduct is such as I fancy they might pursue under the suggesting circumstances. "Human portraits, faithfully drawn," says Carlyle, "are of all pictures the welcomest on human walls," and whatever the defects of art which a critical observer may see in those here presented, I trust for their reception to the readily appreciable agreeableness which they have to nature. As to the moral of

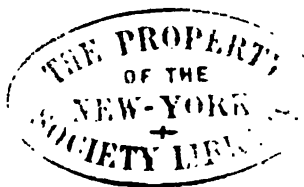
the book, if it has one, it should be left for the discovery of the reader, but that no one may be tempted beyond this preface by any expectation of finding a philosophy opposed to the old but happily not altogether obsolete ideas, the author confesses at the outset her belief that—there is a God in Heaven.

CINCINNATI, August 15, 1852

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HAGAR.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, how this tyrant doubt torments my breast!
My thoughts like birds, who, frightened from their nest,
Around the place where all was hushed before,
Flutter, and hardly nestle any more.

OTWAY.

Yes, let the eagle change its plume,
The leaf its hue, the flower its bloom,
But ties around that heart were spun,
Which could not, would not be undone.

CAMPBELL.

FRAGMENTS of clouds, leaden and black and ashen, ran under and over each other along the sky, now totally and now only in part obscuring the half moon, whose white and chilly rays might not penetrate the rustic bower within which sat two persons, conversing in low and earnest tones. But, notwithstanding the faintness of the moonlight, enough of their dresses and features were discernible to mark them male and female, for the dull skirts of night had now scarcely overswept the golden borders of

twilight. The long and dense bar that lay across the west, retained still some touch of its lately crimson fires.

It was about the middle of autumn, and the stir of the stiffening leaves, spotted, and dun, and yellow, were like a sorrowful prophecy. How different from the voice of the wind that shook loose the sunny tresses of May, or the sigh that followed, when the rosy bands were stripped from her arms, and hidden beneath the ampler robe of summer. But the dreary monotone did not hush the voices within that quiet recess. I know not if it were that which subdued them into such tender whispers—whispers, seeming, indeed, like the utterances of love.

“What business had they there at such a time?”

The retreat they had chosen was quite secure from observation, not for its remoteness from men's habitations, for at the distance of a mile, or a little less, perhaps, to the north, the two or three slim spires of a quiet village whitened against the sky, and just across the meadow shone the light of a cottage window, and about its low eaves, like a purple wreath, curled the smoke of pine logs aglow on its hearth; while along the opposite way ran a gray streak of dust, winding in among steep hills on the one side, and sloping upward to the village on the other. From this highway the clatter of hoofs, or

the rumble of wheels, was now and then heard, but it was in the direction of the cottage that the girl looked oftenest.

The field lying between the road and the house was divided by a hollow, or trough, as it might very properly be called, so narrow and deep was it, along the bottom of which ran a small rivulet, in spring and summer like a soft skein, catching the sunlight in its silver tangles, now, however, shrunken and dried almost away, here and there making a faint ripple over the pink and white pebbles, or around the dull, red sandstones, but settled mostly into stagnant pools.

At some distance from where the deeply worn path, leading from the cottage to the highway, crossed the brook, the steep sides of the hollow had been pushed back, as it were, forming as pretty a basin as ever held blue violets, or yellow primroses, or screened lovers from prying eyes. In this little nook, or close against one edge of it, grew a clump of dwarfish elms, with their pendulous boughs almost touching the ground, so covered and weighed down were they with the twining and intertwining vines of the wild grape. A sylvan shelter was thus formed, within which, as the reader will have guessed, the two persons who have been referred to were seated.

"Then I may certainly expect you?" said the

girl, clasping close between her rosy fingers the pale and slender ones of the man beside her.

"Yes, certainly," he replied. But there was no fervor in his tone; indeed, he seemed scarcely thinking of what he said.

Perhaps the girl thought so, for after a moment's silence she repeated the inquiry, adding, "I am afraid, Nattie, I shall wait, and wait, until the shadows grow heavy and still, and the star, that used to mark your coming, sinks in the seawaves."

"The foolish distrust of a woman," he said, and the arm which had encircled the delicate form sunk carelessly away.

"But your last promise failed, and how *can* I trust, as I used, when you always came before the hour, and chid me for tardiness, though I was never so little behind you?" As she spoke, she held closely the hand he seemed intent on withdrawing from hers, adding, as she finally released it, "Do my fears offend you, dearest?"

"No, I only wanted to look at my watch," replied the lover, if lover he were, feeling that he owed her some apology for his rudeness.

The moonlight glanced on the precious metal, but not with sufficient strength to reveal the time; and unlocking the case, as one not to be baffled by the failure of ordinary means, he placed his fingers delicately on the hands to ascertain by such means

their position, saying : "It grows late, Elsie, and your mother will miss you."

He arose from the wooden bench on which they had been sitting, and seemed only to wait the sanction of his suggestion. But the girl moved not, and saying, simply, she *had* staid later, pulled the wreath of myrtle from her yellow curls, and drew them between her fingers, till they lay in silken bands against her cheek. But such trifling had no power to soothe the turbulence of her thought, or quiet the uneasy moanings of her gentle heart, and, one after another, the tears, large and bright, came to her blue eyes, and dropped silently into her bosom, while her lips trembled with unspoken prayers. God pity thee, poor maiden ! if they were breathed too late.

"This is foolish, Elsie," said the young man, and seating himself beside her, he drew her to his bosom with some real or affected tenderness. The poor child sobbed aloud as she murmured, "Then you do love me, Nathan—you do love me a little, after all."

"Never doubt it again, dear," said he; and, pushing away the yellow bands, wet and heavy with tears, he kissed her forehead, but calmly as a brother would kiss a sister.

She seemed soothed and encouraged; for what a little reed will woman lean her heart upon, and,

even though she feels it breaking, rest satisfied and happy till it fails.

Who can define the fascination whereby the dove nestles itself in the very coil of the serpent?

The tears of Elsie dried in the sunshine of even that faint assurance, and as she lifted her head from its resting-place, a smile parted her lips, and something of confidence was in her tone as she affirmed what she would have asked, "You will come, I know you will come."

"I will come," repeated the young man, rising, "and now, Elsie, go home and employ your thoughts with other things, and be happy till then."

"Till then, and what then?"

"Do not vex yourself, nor me, any farther;" and seeing her mournful look, he added, "we will devise something then; but now we must not linger a moment; I never saw a woman with so little caution."

"Do not speak so," replied the girl. "I will go if you think it best. But if I am not cautious, it is because my love overshadows every thing else."

"Nonsense!" was the contemptuous reply.

"Oh, Nathan," she cried, folding her arms on her bosom, and stepping back from him, "I see it all: I only wish I were dead."

"What is it you would have?" asked the man; "I have said that I love you, and that I will come. Why do you torment us both?"

"You have *said* that you would come. Yes, you have said so," replied the girl; "but not as you once said it; not with a thousand kisses and entreaties that I would not fail you; not with the impassioned tenderness of a lover. Well, I might have known that such would be the end."

"If you think," he exclaimed with harsh quickness, "that I will stand here to listen to your reproaches, you have mistaken my character." He was turning to leave her, but, pausing, said, "If you are afraid, I will go with you a part of the way."

"Afraid!" she answered, sinking down on the rude seat they had quitted, "what have I to be afraid of?"

"Very well, have your pleasure;" and, hastily passing down the hollow, and without once turning, or speaking again, the young man struck into the path leading to the main road, and was soon out of sight.

And the girl—with hands fallen helplessly beside her, her countenance pale as death, and her large, melancholy eyes, tearless now—seemed as one who had come to the edge of doom, and had neither will nor power to struggle any more. The clouds which, in the early evening had flown so swiftly, appearing by their motion to make the steadfast stars quick runners too, had settled into a dull, sober mass,

quite shutting out the chilly light of the half moon, and a drizzling rain began to fall on the shriveled grape-leaves that were over her.

But what was the withdrawal of the moon, pale huntress of shadows, and what the dismal fall of the rain, or the wind, piteously moaning, as some good angel above a ruined soul, to the maiden upon whose heart there was a great burden, which, she might have thought, nor time, nor eternity, might put aside?

The lights were gone from the village windows, save here and there, where some poor sewer, or sad watcher with the sick, kept her weary place, when the sound of a hurrying footstep stirred the silence, and nothing more, for only by the attentive ear would it have been remarked at all, so glidingly, almost stealthily, it moved. Presently the lantern illuminating the broad face of the sign indicating the principal inn, shone down upon a strange gentleman, who had arrived in the evening coach, called for lodging and supper, which the landlady said he scarcely tasted, and then, having drank a glass of wine, had gone out, stating that he should return before midnight.

"Ah, parson," remarked the good-natured landlord, familiarly, as he entered the sitting-room, "you are home betimes to-night."

The stranger seemed not to relish the observation,

but, without making any reply, or removing either cloak or hat, he seated himself at some distance from the talkative host, and having directed a fire to be lighted in his own apartment, relapsed into silence, only answering in monosyllables to the questions of the host about the weather, the number of passengers in the coach, &c. But, though he seemed little inclined to talk, his voice was singularly low and placid, and his whole manner that of one accustomed to all the usages of polite society, however much he might choose to neglect them. On the other inmates of the room he bestowed not a glance; indeed he seemed not aware of their presence, although their conversation was in a high key, and in part evidently intended for his benefit.

"Well, Fred, you give up beat, do you?" said the elder of two persons, seated by a deal table, over which were strewn some torn and soiled cards. "I have beaten you ten games out of twelve, haven't I?"

"Yes, just about ten games out of twelve;" and, lazily shuffling the cards, the man addressed as Fred began the performance of some small trick, apparently for his own special amusement.

"I wish I had a fresh hand," continued the first speaker, "I believe I could beat the wisest parson in the country to-night."

Here the landlord made a great shuffling with his feet, glancing uneasily from the card-player to the

gentleman in the cloak, touching his fore-finger to the black string about his own neck, by way of reference to the white neckcloth. But, as if not seeing the sign so adroitly made, the player continued, "Yes, I only wish I had one of the reverend clergy opposite, and I'd rake down every thing he dared to put on the board."

"Ahem," said the landlord, looking all confusion, "what a terrible storm; bad night for religious meetings, and some of my family out for devotional exercises, too. You, sir, of the city, are not so annoyed by a storm."

The young man smiled maliciously, stroking his beard silently with one hand, and as soon as the landlord had ended his artful speech, went on to say that he would even put up his best black setter against the catechism; or he would go farther, and risk his favorite hunter, Lightfoot, against the flimsiest cloak that ever covered a hypocritical sinner.

"I think, my reverend friend, your room must be comfortable," said the host, trying to drown the voice of the obtrusive braggart; and, taking a small lamp from the top of the stove, about which the leaking oil was smoking, he acted as chamberlain to his cloaked visitor, whom he evidently thought a person of consideration.

"Really, Arnold, you were a little too hard on our clerical neighbor," said the younger of the

players, throwing down his cards, and stretching lazily.

"No, I wasn't hard enough, for I am on the track of a lame fox," replied Arnold; "and if the scent hold good, I shall have rare sport on being in at the death. And so, you think I was hard?" A contemptuous chuckle followed, upon which the young man answered, dallying with the heavy links of gold that crossed his vest: "After all, I believe you were just about hard enough—just about hard enough, Jo Arnold."

"Devilish good night for a buffalo hunt. I should like to be on the prairie, forty miles from human habitation, with a mad bull or two at bay."

"I guess one would do," said Fred, laughing.

But Arnold drew himself up, and buttoning his coat, as though about to go forth, rejoined, "No, I say I should like just now to have two mad bulls before my dogs."

"You are right, Jo—two would just make good sport before your dogs." In a moment, he added, "I wonder how Catharine does to-night?"

CHAPTER II.

A moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced—and then it faded as it came.

BYRON.

Thy words have touched a chord of Memory's lyre
And waked the key-note of the saddest dirge
That Fancy ever played to Melancholy.

RUFUS DAWES.

LEFT alone in the little chamber to which he was shown, the strange gentleman took up the lamp, daintily, and elevating it somewhat, turned slowly from side to side, until he had given the room a careful survey. Of a simple and humble order was the furniture, but there was enough of it for necessity, and strict cleanliness was observable at a glance. Nevertheless, the guest seemed doubtful still, and folding down the snowy counterpane, he examined the linen of the bed with a close scrutiny.

"The parlor of a country spinster!" he said, speaking to himself; and violently ringing, he ordered an additional ewer of water, and fresh sheets, taking care to dust a chair with his pocket hand-

kerchief, while the servant was in waiting. On the table beside the bed lay a small leathern-bound volume, and glancing at the title, the young man hastily put it down, and leaning his head against the back of the high wooden rocking chair in which he sat, leisurely untied his white neckcloth, and carelessly dropped it on the floor beside him. He then took from a pocket-book a letter, and unfolding it to tear off part of the blank leaf, a long tress of golden hair slid from its folds and fell on the floor, where it remained until he had made some memoranda, in pencil, when, taking it up, he held it over the flame, smiling as it wreathed, curled aside, then caught fire, and blazed, and fell in ashes.

Meantime the host rejoined the two persons whom he had left at the card table, and who had by this time drawn near the hearth. The younger was a harmless slip of the moneyed aristocracy of the commercial metropolis, resting his right foot upon his left knee, and with eyes—blue and always full of sleepy good humor—now nearly closed. He was listening indolently to his companion, who, as the hour grew later, became more voluble.

This person it would have been hard to describe as belonging to any particular country, being a specimen of a tribe found everywhere. He might have been twenty-five years of age, and was of dark, swarthy complexion, large dull hazel eyes, brown

hair, thick and straight, parted on a forehead of medium height, and had the ends of his hair carefully turned in against his neck, and to either cheek. His beard, which was very heavy, and worn full, was a mixture of grayish auburn and black. His dress was half slovenly, half genteel, and his bones seemed to have been made for some other person, being a great deal too large for him, especially in the joints. The hands and fingers were covered thickly with black and sorrel hairs, resembling his beard.

To be different from other persons he fancied was to be superior to them, and in consequence he was full of affectations.

He also delighted in a pompous sort of self-display. Herein perhaps was his *forte*, and he never allowed a fit occasion to pass without an exhibition of his abilities in this art of, what his familiars called, showing off. His chief pride was to be thought a famous hunter (Heaven knows whether he had ever slain bird or beast more formidable than pigeon or rabbit), and a man of invincible courage; he knew nothing more charming than a surprise, however disagreeable to his victim, or to startle the feelings or shock the prejudices of those with whom he chanced at any time to be in conversation; and he had the inconvenient infirmity of a great fondness for money, while

poor, and without energy, or any definite aim in life.

He was always associated with some person of larger means and less wit than himself; and, just now, the sufferer was Frederick Wurth. They had casually met, and this man, whose name was Joseph Arnold, fastened himself upon the young metropolitan, as the ragged weed will cling to a fine fleece; and he was gradually obtaining an influence over him, of which Wurth was by no means aware; but if he had been, all would have been the same; and so long as he had five shillings, Arnold could have had three of them; not that one was very weak, or the other at all crafty; Wurth was constitutionally easy, good-humored, and indolent; and being an heir of wealth, and never having known any suffering or misfortune, the angles of his character were not sharpened and brought out, as they might have been under other influences. And Arnold had probably never marked out for himself any line of conduct, for good or for evil; if chance threw an advantage in his way he was not scrupulous in availing himself of it; but he did not coolly, and with intelligent forecast, devise the means by which any advantage should be secured. His character, however, and that of the other persons in this history, will be sufficiently developed as we proceed.

On the entrance of the landlord, Arnold, who had repeatedly said his best things to Wurth, and cared not to waste words on an old listener, when he could have a fresh one, making room for him by the fire, asked if it were nearly breakfast time.

The good man looked puzzled, as no doubt he really was, and taking from his trowsers pocket a large silver watch, he said it was lacking thirteen minutes of twelve o'clock, and in his hotel they didn't breakfast at midnight.

Arnold opened his eyes, combed his beard with his fingers, shook his head doubtfully, and remarked, "I believe you are right; but I had forgotten all about the time, and seeing you, supposed you up for morning; but if it's only midnight I must wake up. How is the weather—clear and shining? I don't care much for such nights; they do well enough for coons, and such small game; but give me a dark, rainy night, for a hunt."

"Just the night for you, then," said the host: "it's as dark as Egypt. A man could not see his hat three inches before his face; and hark, how the rain beats against the window!"

"Sure enough," replied Arnold, as if for the first time aware of the storm. "It's just the sort of night I like—first rate for a buffalo hunt. I should like to be on the prairie to-night, forty, or fifty, or

a hundred miles from a settlement, with my dogs and rifle. I would not like better sport."

After the astonishment of the landlord had sufficiently subsided, the young Nimrod inquired what business that gentleman of the cloth appeared to have, in so obscure a village, adding that he should not be surprised if some of the best horses were missing in the morning.

But now that the parson was out of hearing, the landlord readily joined in the laugh against him; so the young man had no object in proceeding further on that tack.

"Seriously," he said—and for once he spoke as he thought—"I don't like the looks of that man. There is more in his cold gray eyes than may be seen at a glance; and then his sweet, low tone, and gliding step (did you notice how like a cat he walked?) never belonged to an honest man."

The host expressed some sort of acquiescence, but in truth he had not noticed these peculiarities at all; and Arnold continued, as if thinking aloud—"I wonder what he is doing in these parts. I'll wager my life it 's—"

"I know," said Gaius, who did not like to have any one seem wiser than himself; "I know what he comes for."

"Well, what is it?"

"There is a consumptive lady in the south end

of the town ; these long autumn rains take off such persons mighty fast, sir, and I shall not be surprised, any day, to hear of her death. Just before you arrived, sir, I saw a young man riding along with a measure in his hand, and I thought it was for Mary's coffin, poor girl ; but it was for old grandfather Mapes's, who has had the palsy these seven years ; and yet, it was a sudden death. He walked in the garden yesterday and looked better than he had done for months, and this morning he got up seeming as well as usual, and ate venison for breakfast, and it tasted better to him, he said, than any thing had for a long while. About noon he complained a little of drowsiness, but none of them thought any thing of it ; he had often been affected in that way ; and about two o'clock, as he was sitting and talking with his sister, he put his hand up to his head, and she thought he might be faint or something, and started into the next room to get camphor, or water—I don't know which—and before she got to the door, sir, he just fell on the floor as dead as a hammer."

A smile, that was half a sneer, came over the face of Arnold, as he said, "Then this clergyman has come to preach the funeral of grandfather Mapes, you suppose?"

"No, sir, that was not my supposition, sir. The funeral will be held in the old church, just above

my stand, and the pastor will preach it; for the old man was one of the communicants. He has gone to the world of spirits, sir; gone to the world of spirits; there is where old grandfather Mapes has gone." And the good man compressed his lips and seemed to feel that a wise thing had been delivered by him.

But other eyes than the poet's do glance from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, and coming to his more habitual thought, he said, "If the roan colt is put up at the vendue I will bid as high a price as any man in the village."

"Likely the colt will be up at the vendue," replied Arnold, as though the chattels of the dead man were familiar to him, and to conceal his mirth he bent down and caressed a huge brown dog, that sat erect, though with closed eyes, at his knee. Looking up however after a moment, he said, "You spoke of a consumptive lady—this man in the white neckcloth visits her, you think?"

"He has been to my house several times, pays liberally for his fare, and asks no questions, so of course I ask none; but he walks to the south somewhere, and stays till a late hour sometimes, and I don't know where he would be more likely to go—but he will hardly come again. Mary is a doomed girl, sir; a doomed girl. Her brother left home yesterday," he continued, "though she entreated him

to stay, and I doubt if he ever sees her alive. It's a dreadful thing for the well and strong to slight the wishes or premonitions of the sick, sir."

Drops of sweat broke over the white forehead of the young man who had seemed asleep; he pushed aside the brown glossy curls that had fallen over his eyes, rose, uneasily, and going to the window looked a moment on the storm, when, buttoning his coat, he ordered his horse and carriage.

"Do you think, Fred," said Arnold, affecting not to notice his preparations for departure, "that this clerical rascal we have seen here, comes to visit a consumptive lady?"

The young man rejoined, indifferently, that he didn't know, and his friend continued: "I'll be hanged if I don't believe he comes to see some pretty girl, hereabouts, that is not consumptive. But what do you mean, Fred? Are you crazy, to go out into the storm?"

"I ought to go," he replied. "I am neglecting business, and the rain will not hurt me. With hard driving I may be at home by eight in the morning. Don't forget me, Jo, when you come to town."

"Stop," said Arnold, taking hold of his arm; "stop, and hear reason. You see this rain would be likely to wet you, Fred, if you should be in it for three or four hours; besides, it will be lighter

when the sun comes up. The short time can't make much difference in your interests. Stop till daylight. We will have some coffee, and something a little stronger, if you like, and I will ride down with you. Come, come, Fred, don't sail out dead in the eye of the storm. You see the white cravat will be in the morning coach, and I am afraid of the cloth."

The young man hesitated, ashamed to reveal his real motive for departure, and aware that he could not urge the validity of that stated, which indeed was far less imperative than another, which should have detained him at home, or made him hasten to return, though opposed by flood or fire. The vantage ground was improved, and Arnold countermanded the order which his friend had given, and had now too little force of character to have executed, saying, to quiet his conscience, "I don't know as we could see to drive—not well, certainly."

"Well," said Arnold, "I shouldn't think we could see at all."

"No, we couldn't see at all." And, unbuttoning his coat, the unquiet Wurth sat down by the fire.

Directions were given for an early breakfast, Arnold incidentally remarking, to the gaping landlord, that he would like a black snake served up with vinegar, and that his friend would have a chop and potatoes.

“I like to scare such fellows,” he said, as the host withdrew. “While you were asleep,” he continued, “the old chap talked so like a simpleton that he made my head ache; and I just told him that I’d put him out of his own house, if he kept on. I wouldn’t give two cents for such a man.”

“Yes, just about two,” replied Wurth. “But come, let’s to bed.”

CHAPTER III.

THE iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

SHAKESPEARE.

The helpless look of blooming infancy.

BYRON.

Death lies on her like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.

SHAKESPEARE.

AGREEABLY to his suggestion, Frederick Wurth went to bed; and if in his heart there were any uneasy sensations, they were soon lulled into quiet. The rain beat against the windows, and the wind dashed itself in stormy gusts against the roof, but happily the snug warm chamber was very different from the outer world, of which the fretful turbulence, as he listened, became a lullaby that soothed him into sleep.

Against the windows of a lofty chamber, not many miles away, the same storm was beating, but the heavy sweep of the wind was broken by the contiguity of massive walls, so that it was in baffled and subdued moanings rather than in tempestuous

threats that it sounded above the roof. The shutters were closed round, to soften as much as might be the tumult of the elements, and the lamp was so shaded that its light scarcely penetrated the gorgeous folds of the curtains, that swept from glittering and elaborate cornices, against the roses and blue bells which were sunken in the soft costly carpet, as in a fleece.

The profusion of pictures, and sculptures, illustrating schools of contemporary art—luxurious chairs, divans, and ottomans, of daintily carved rose-wood, and cushioned with crimson velvet—the bed's canopy of azure and gold, and heavily sweeping silken draperies—all reflected in ample mirrors that reached from the floor to the ceiling, indicated the presence of wealth, and the most unhesitating liberality in its use.

Before the glowing anthracite—guarded by statues, of Parian whiteness, whose extended hands were locked above the generous heat—a small table was drawn—the foot, a lion couchant, of dark wood, and the top of Egyptian marble, inlaid with lilies of pearl—upon which were set in a stand of chased gold half a dozen bottles of Bohemian glass, so costly and beautiful as to be fit receptacles for the most delicious wines that come from Italy or sunny Teneriffe.

And besides liquors and confections there was on

the table a small basket, made of fairy-like shells, of every hue and form ever brought by adventurous sailor from shores of farthest seas, in which were little skeins of scarlet, blue, and yellow worsted, a needle-book with covers curiously wrought, a golden thimble with a band of gems—perhaps but counterfeits—and a spectacle-case of pearl, elaborately inlaid—doubtless a souvenir of some recent service.

And in a low and easy chair with a high carved back, beside this table, sat a little woman who had heard the storms of at least half a century and was no longer startled or disturbed by their wild music. On both her cheeks, which were a little hollow and of an even colorless tone, stood—for they did not fall or wave—two or three stiff curls of yellowish or sorrel hair, and over her white lace collar fell the blue floats of as tasteful a cap as any gentlewoman of her order need desire.

Her black satin gown was the very model of precision, notwithstanding three narrow ruffles or flounces at the bottom of the skirt, which was shortened just sufficiently for a partial revealing of the lace points of her petticoat. The bodice—setting aside any nice punctilio—fitted closely over a bust that would never serve for an artist's model, however it might have done, relieved of the pressure of thirty years or so. The brooch, fastening the collar, was a miniature, perhaps of some long-

ago lover, perhaps only of her lamented grandsire, for the lineaments were not defined with sufficient accuracy to make the age of the subject a matter easily to be guessed. A heavy gilt buckle, of an antique fashion, clasped the belt exactly over the middle seam of the bodice, and if by chance (for chance may disarrange the buckle of a spinster as well as anything else) it slipped to the left or right, even so much as the thickness of a rose-leaf, it was immediately adjusted.

This lady was just now—that is, on the aforementioned stormy night—concentrating her artistical abilities for the insertion of two little black dots at an accurately ascertained distance from one little red dot—the black dots to constitute the eyes, as did the red dot the lower extremity of the nose, of a white poodle, wrought of the worsted contained in the pretty shell basket, on a bit of canvas.

She held the work close to her eyes, and, whether or not she saw clearly, wore no spectacles. It would have seemed that her sight was failing, from the fact that the dots had been several times picked out with a fine needle, and carefully put in again: and yet one was perceptibly farther than the other from the red top of the poodle's nose.

An uneasy twitch of the muscles followed the discovery of this awry business, and an involuntary reaching toward the spectacles, but, instead of

drawing forth the needful glasses, she deftly arranged the skeins in such way as to quite conceal their handsome case.

On the opposite side of the table rested a hand, small and exceedingly delicate—its diminutive size set off, to the best advantage by the frill of the wristband. The taper fingers sparkled with rings—some but plain bands, others glittering with diamonds, and others containing polished stones, the value of which remained to most beholders a mystery.

That hand was none of your vulgar hands; not by any possibility could it have hewed a shaft or laid an architrave or forged an iron chain or felled so much as a green bole; but such a hand it was as most ladies admire, and within which, in case of courtesy or compulsion, they will not greatly shrink from resting their own—provided the infliction be of transient duration, and its owner be well entitled to assume such custody. In the present instance the hand was not too flattering a voucher, for its master was certainly prepossessing, although asleep. He was not less neat than the lady working at the black dots, but he lacked something of her prim formality.

His head rested against the high-cushioned back of his easy chair. His eyes were closed, and his lips, a little parted, disclosed a set of teeth remark-

ably white and sound. His right hand, in which was muffled a snowy cambric handkerchief, smelling rather of drugs than essences, was placed on his left knee, and his slippered feet were half sunken in the cushion on which they rested.

Suddenly, perhaps to ease her sight, the lady leaves off work, and diligently surveys the sleeper. Her clear gray eyes open something wider than is their wont. "Bless me!" she is saying to herself, "how white his hair is! Yet—he can't be less than sixty, fresh and fair as he looks!" Here she buried the handsome spectacle case quite in the bottom of the basket, and tipped off the pretty skeins with the gold thimble, on which was engraven—Araminta Crum.

This accomplished, she looked again at the sleeping gentleman. The footstool had slipped forward, and, with most kindly regard, she readjusted it. Her whitehaired companion half unclosed his blue eyes—smiled graciously, as if to say, "Thank you, Miss Crum," and nestled again under the wing of

"Magic sleep, that comfortable bird."

"Oh, pshaw!" said the lady, grieved that she had disturbed his repose. It must have been so, for she added, in a moment, "Beg pardon, Doctor, I had really no intention of waking you out of that *sweet sleep*."

"Ah, madam, no apology is required. My excessive fatigue to-night would medicine a much ruder jostling." And the doctor threw the cambric handkerchief over his head, turned from the lamp, and from Miss Crum, and burying quite the jeweled hand in his trowsers pocket, presently, as was indicated by his even breathing, walked again in the unsubstantial realm of dreams.

The eyes of Miss Crum's little dog were forgotten. She grew restless. "I wish I only knew the time," she thought. "I wonder if I could take the doctor's watch from his fob without annoying him." She drew it forth, and, having seen the time, opened it just to brush off a speck of dust she saw on the face, and clasped it, with a snap that she could not have designed; there was however no evil consequence, for the doctor slept on, even though she replaced it without any special cautiousness.

"If I am so light fingered, he will think I am trying to steal," she thought, half audibly.

The room seemed very lonely. Death might be near, too, for aught she knew; but, though she looked toward the bed, she did not approach it to see the condition of the pale, patient sufferer. She would always rather be alone, than have any one pretend to sit with her, and sleep all the time.

She stirred with her delicate hand the fire, and then summoned a servant to add to it a scuttle of

coal—but all the ancient kingdom of Night held not so inveterate a sleeper.

All at once across the ruffled sea of her thought fell the shadow of some sweet prophetic star, and, taking up the lamp, she walked on tip-toe with it to a mirror, and holding it first high, then low, then just level with the golden buckle, she contemplated her personal attractions.

A satisfied smile came over her face, which still retained traces of fair looks, but an amendment suggested itself, and she began to pull the stiff curls into more graceful length; but, alas! the string by which the false front was attached to the gray knot behind, gave way, and down it came, leaving her no alternative but to take off the lace cap and blue floats, mend the string, and decently compose the whole as soon as possible.

It would have been perhaps a frightful sight to see, but to Miss Crum—and, for her care, only to that lady—it was so familiar as to induce no terror, nor even a recollection of the contrasting appearances of that head, thirty, or twenty, or even a dozen years before.

Now she was silent as a dream; her hair, “done up in any simple knot,” but put a little higher, she thought, would show the handsome comb to more advantage, and also give the cap a prettier effect; and in pursuance of the thought she proceeded.

Both hands were in that ungraceful employment of tying up the hair : one end of a yard of black tape was held between her teeth, and the other binding together the slim remnant of once auburn tresses—thus making an unbecoming indenture across one cheek—when suddenly an arm was thrown around her, and a voice was heard—

“ Good heavens ! Miss Crum, what has happened ? no suicidal attempt, I trust ! ” and applying his jeweled fingers to the disfigured cheek, the doctor said more calmly, “ The incision is not fatal, not dangerous ; allow me — ” and he endeavored to support her to a sofa.

“ Work thou my busy brain, thou hast not failed me yet, ”

has been written by some poet for an exigency to task a hero's powers ; and perhaps the line flashed through the brain of the surprised Miss Crum, for in affected fright she upset the lamp, and before it could be relighted, she managed to adjust, in some sort, the curls and the cap. It was a terrible mishap, but thereby good might come ; by no other chance, it may be, could the doctor's evidently gentle and tender mood have been induced.

Seating herself close beside him, she explained, that noticing his silver locks awakened curiosity to see if her own were fading, and she had taken off

her cap for that purpose; the rest—whatever he might fancy he had seen—must have been a shadow, or haply shapes of dreams, that lingered in his imperfect wakefulness.

"You see," she said, coquettishly taking his jeweled fingers in her own, "You see there is no blood on your hand." - /

"An optical illusion: I understand;" and the doctor withdrew his hand as if to examine it himself.

The lady looked as if offended, hitched her chair to the other side of the table, and took up her worsted dog, to add three stitches to the tail.

"What a beautiful little creature!" said the doctor, taking the embroidery from her, and gazing at it with seeming admiration.

"What is *my* work to you?" said Miss Crum, with sentimental dryness.

"Why—this ingenious handiwork of yours has given me pleasure—nothing more."

"Selfish, selfish man," replied Miss Crum, in a reproachful tone.

"My dear madam," replied the old gentleman—but what he would have said we do not know, and cannot tell.

A thin, white hand put aside the silken drapery of the bed, and a tremulous low voice called.

In a moment both were bending over the pillow.

"It is all over," said the doctor, laying the end of a finger on the fluttering lids.

The nurse took the baby from the chilled bosom and relaxing clasp; on the golden tide of a new love, the pure spirit of the gentle wife and mother had floated over the stormy midnight and across the wild river of death, to rest in eternity. Her heart was trusting and devotional in life, and in the fond blindness of woman, her last prayer had been for Frederick, and not for herself. Heaven sent its softest answer.

CHAPTER IV.

. You would have heard
The beating of your pulses while he spoke.
CZOLY.

Two or three days had passed. The rain was over, and the atmosphere was clear and cool. Here and there a belt of cloud darkened the horizon, or whitened among the towering treetops like a ragged fleece; but for the most part the sky was purely and coldly blue, as if the late storm had swept it to its furthest depths. Bird cages were set in the southern windows, but the ruffled inmates sat sullenly on their perches, or made at best but now and then a quick and restless chirp, or low and mournful twitter. Vines, with their leaves reddening, but scarcely yet falling away, clung close to the walls, and under the southern windows, and in sheltered dooryards, some of the hardier flowers were still in bloom. People were moving busily to and fro; dense crowds filled the great thorough-

fares; carts, stages, and coaches, ladies in gay attire, drawn forth by pleasure, and beggars in their rags, to ask alms, and shivering barefooted children, bearing great bundles, jostled aside by the hurrying steps of the stout men of business. Over the magnificent bay towered a forest of masts, and traffic and her votaries blocked up the wharves. But one great commercial city is very much like another, and New York, at the time of which I write, was not materially different from the New York of to-day.

Before one of the most imposing residences of the then fashionable quarter, were drawn up a long row of mourning coaches. The closed blinds and the open door of the hall, about which silently hovered some half-dozen men with serious faces, and the hearse, heavily draped with black cloth, intimated to the careless passer his own mortality.

Within, the friends of the deceased were gathered in silent decorum—not many, nor very sorrowful: in truth, the melancholy pall threw its terrible shadow only upon one heart—a heart that real sorrow had touched for the first time—a heart breaking with thoughts of the reproaches which the white lips of the dead had never spoken. The Catharine of whom the young man spoke in the village tavern, she whose dying prayer was for Frederick, lay beneath this customary solemn

pageantry, and the mourner whose arm rested heavily but fondly on the coffin, was tormented with the most painful memories of wrongs or of neglected duties.

“Oh! if I had loved her better—if I had done more to please and gratify her—if I had but returned to stand by her bedside, to take our child in my arms!” But these reflections were all too late, and about the widowed husband closed the fixed reality which shut away the light: silence—perpetual, torturing silence. At the further end of the room, and opposite the dead and the bereaved, white hands unclosed the golden clasp of a Bible, and a voice unspeakably sweet and soothing read, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Hastily the young man turned in the direction of the speaker, and an expression of surprise came over his countenance. The pastor of the church of which his wife had been a member, and whom he had never seen, had been sent for to perform these last offices, and he was at once recognized as the strange clergyman seen at midnight in the village where we first encountered him.

A little distrustfully Frederick Wurth listened at first, but when the fervent eloquence of the minister's prayer fell on his heart, like oil on troubled waves, prejudice was more and more sub-

dued till it was gone; for when the heart is very sorrowful we are not often casuists, nor in the presence of death, and of immortality, apt to be infidels of the love of God. The eyes of the preacher were full of mild pity; tears moistened them more than once, and more than once his thin lips trembled as he spoke of the inevitable end of human life, and the resurrection, and the judgment to come. The power of a most fine intelligence was in all he said, and his own spirit seemed impressed with a melancholy regret at the loss of a friend, and with solemn awe at the thought that she was yet near, purified of all earthly ill; and among his hearers, who had hearts, was felt an awakening thrill as he described her gentleness and grace, and obedience to the heavenly will—and their utter desolation, into which no comfort can come, who have parted from dear friends who have gone into the dark without faith, or any assurance of rest.

Leaning against a door which led from the hall into a room wherein the service was being performed, stood Joseph Arnold, his eyes downcast, and his arms folded across his bosom. Sometimes he looked inquiringly at the preacher, knitting his brows, and biting his lips, as one puzzled with doubt; and then—at some tenderer or more daring flight of eloquence—the expression of a serious in-

terest came over his face, and he stood as if bound with a spell, in spite of his previously formed convictions in regard to the preacher.

"A man of fine talents," whispered a little plethoric person to Arnold, fanning himself with his hat as he withdrew from peering into the dim parlor. "A man of fine talents: I know of no one among us who gives greater promise of eminence."

"Who is he?" asked the person addressed, calmly raising his eyes, and surveying the satin vest of the very rotund little communicative gentleman.

"Ah, sir! don't you know?" and the tone indicated, in spite of the polite manner, that in his opinion the inquirer was much behind the times, at least in matters ecclesiastical.

"No, I don't know him," replied Arnold; a half smile stealing over his face, for he felt that he could afford to smile, and also acknowledge ignorance; and though he might have elevated himself in the eyes of his new friend by adding that he was a stranger in the city, he forebore to avail himself of such an advantage, or to offer any further observation.

"Pardon me," said the little man, somewhat disconcerted, "I supposed every one had heard of the famous preacher Mr. Warburton."

"Nathan Warburton of the Blank street church?" asked Arnold; "I have heard of him."

"Never seen him, then? Humph!"

"Yes, I have seen him before."

"Very remarkable that having once seen you should forget him; he is not a person to forget, sir, I fancy."

"You are quite correct; I think he is not a person to forget;" and folding his arms, the young man looked toward the preacher, seeming no way inclined to continue the conversation. Having learned his name, he turned to listen with a new interest.

The slant rays of the sinking sun fell on the coffin, as it was removed to the hearse; the stricken husband was assisted into the first carriage, accompanied by an elderly female relative, and his friend Joseph Arnold; and men and women hastily climbed into the remaining coaches; some from a sense of duty, and some for the sake of a ride in the country; while, folding his arms, and lowering his hat above his brows, the young clergyman gazed on the preparations for the procession, and without lifting his eyes to the many who waited for the pressure of his hand and his smile, at length, with his habitual light and stealthy tread, entered the beautiful but simple black phaeton in which he was to leave the scene. In a few moments, with decent solemnity, every one had departed.

Suddenly the window of an upper chamber was

opened, the curtain drawn aside, and Araminta Crum, holding the little orphan in her arms, looked out.

"Poor thing!" she said, "she is better off, for this is a world of trouble." And in a moment she added, "Poor Mrs. Wurth! if she had taken my advice and procured another physician, she might be alive and well. I never did like that doctor. But, after all, he may be as good as any other doctor, or any other man, for all I know—they are all wicked tyrants."

"Why, Miss Crum!" exclaimed Mrs. Goodell, in a sort of sweet surprise, as she rummaged through a bureau, and took thence every article belonging to the late Mrs. Wurth.

Mrs. Goodell was the upper domestic, and on the decease of her mistress she stepped at once into a new position. The sound of the funeral carriages was not yet still when she gave orders for the preparation of supper, and bringing two huge trunks from a dusty closet, began to dispose of the effects of the departed.

"There is no knowing," she said, "into whose hands they may fall;" and she was determined to secure for the baby, when she should be grown, one good black silk dress, and certain other things which she specified, including a portion of the family silver that was in her keeping.

"Really," said Miss Crum, "I don't see how you can feel such an interest in the welfare of this child; likely enough she will have a stepmother that will teach her to hate you."

"Why, Miss Crum!" said the astonished Mrs. Goodell, heaping up a column of napkins. "These must be marked in the baby's name," she said, counting them by touching each one with the forefinger of her left hand. "I wonder what her name will be?"

"I am sure I don't care whether she has any name at all or not," replied the nurse, rocking listlessly to and fro.

"Why, Miss Crum! you want the baby to have a pretty name, surely?"

But Miss Crum insisted that she cared not a fig whether it had any name, ugly or beautiful, adding that she was no less indifferent to any thing else or to every body else; and in the conclusion of the sentence there seemed a bitter meaning.

"Why, Miss Crum! I am afraid you are a going to have a spell of sickness!" and the provident Mrs. Goodell snapped the lock of the trunk she had been filling, and the black silk dress was secured for the baby.

"Oh dear me!" said the venerable maiden, hitching her chair from a streak of sunshine, "the day will never end; it is a good long hour to twilight."

"My dear child," said the housekeeper, who, by the way, was much younger than the nurse, "you are certainly going to have a spell of sickness. One hour is no longer than another: it all depends on the mind. But you must drink a strong cup of tea, and have a good night's rest, and to-morrow you will feel like another person. A cup of tea is my cure-all, Miss Crum."

But the nurse insisted that tea would only make her feel worse, and that in fact she did n't care if she was a going to have a spell of sickness; she would as soon be out of the world as in it. It was a weary, dreary place at best, she said, and for her it had no charms.

"Why, Miss Crum!" and the housekeeper pressed her hand to her forehead for a moment, as if trying to recall something; and leaving the open trunk from which she had blown the dust, she slipped away to her own room, whence she presently returned with a dingy little pamphlet, the cover of which was gone, and the leaves curled, indicating long usage. Turning over page after page, she at length paused, and bending her eyes close upon the book, apparently read, with the deepest interest.

"I knew it," she said directly, "I knew it."

"What did you know?" asked the nurse, taking both the baby's feet in one hand, and calling it a "precious little toad."

"I knew you would be sick," the housekeeper replied; "I had such a strange dream last night."

"What was it—about me?" and the nurse looked frightened.

"No, not about you; it was about cows. And," continued the housekeeper, "I have known this book to tell so many things that come out true! This book," she said, reöpening it, "was formerly the property of Bonaparte, was consulted by him every day, and his success in life is said to have been mainly caused by it. It can be neither given away nor lent, but must be either bought or sold."

"But the dream, the dream," said the nurse, "and my sickness; I think I feel a touch of vertigo."

"Well, I dreamed of seeing a great many cows," said the housekeeper, seating herself on the carpet in the midst of frocks, bonnets, shoes, perfumes, gloves, thimbles, and cushions; "and the book says to dream of cows, if they be milch cows, sleek and fat, is a good sign, indicating that some relative will shortly leave you money; but if they be poor and lean—"

The return of the funeral carriages interrupted her, and hastily going below, Miss Crum warded off her approaching illness, and it may be even death, with melancholy, pleasing reveries. It was a bad world, it was—and men were growing more and more heartless and absurd, and the appre-

ciation of excellence, in ladies, seemed to her quite obsolete; nothing could please the men any more but the unmeaning faces of young girls—mere children; it was not so once—but now, she had no doubt that that ridiculous and starched up doctor — She paused, and a gentler emotion was betrayed by a relaxing of the fixed expression of her lips; there was at least one more widower in the world! and widowers —

CHAPTER V.

My head is like to rend, Willie,
My heart is like to break.

MOTHER WELLS.

It were all one, that I should love
A bright particular star, and think to wed it.

SHAKESPEARE.

. Although
The air of Paradise did fan the house,
And Angels officed all, I will be gone.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN a small and simply furnished chamber of a cottage some fifty miles from New York, the cottage mentioned in our first chapter, the young girl whom we called Elsie, was ill, but rather from mental excitement than any physical disorder. Sometimes she lay quietly, her hands locked together, and her eyes closed, wearing on her countenance an expression of intense suffering; then she would suddenly rise in her bed and gaze earnestly forth, as though influenced by an absorbing but always baffling expectation; and then, turning away, she would bury her face in her hands, and sigh so very mournfully that all the pathos ever

shown in tenderest art could scarcely match her sad display of feeling. And sometimes she would rock to and fro, and strive to reassure her heart by repeating fond words and promises, on which she once relied with certainty; words and promises on which, poor girl, she could rely no more; and with this conviction ever suddenly obtruding, to check bright dreams, her soul grew sick; and falling on her knees, she would cry, "Have mercy, God! Thou knowest my weakness and wickedness. Thou, who fashioned my heart, and made it what it is, crush me not that I yielded to the instincts of this nature thou hast given; or if thou withdrawest thyself, leave me the help of human comfort; in the bright middle heavens darken not the sun of love; on the fresh borders of existence wither not the boughs of the tree of life, nor blacken all its opening buds. I cry to thee, and thou art silent; I reach out my arms toward thee till they fall back aching and weary on a bosom without peace, empty of hope, of every thing but the sense of thy displeasure and my ruin. Are the dews of mercy exhausted that they may not drop against my hot forehead any more? is the hand of heavenly pity paralyzed, that it will not unwind the flames which coil and tighten about my heart! Break asunder, All Merciful, at least the flaxlike thread of this existence of agony, in the fires of thy wrath; push

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stroking back her hair, she tenderly kissed the cheek of the sufferer, seeing not, for her love, that she shrank away.

Softly she arranged the pillow, and carefully folded the counterpane; and telling Elsie to try to sleep a little, went out for the preparation of some cordial—such as she fancied—kind and unsuspecting woman—would bring back the lost light of health.

Alone, the young girl thrust the covering, so carefully folded, away, and sitting upright, exclaimed, "This is the bitterest of all! she called me her dear, good girl! If she cast me out, and disowned me, I could live, but this undeserved kindness and confidence! I cannot bear it."

The expression of her anguish was overheard; the door again opened silently, and the same sweet voice inquired if there was any new suffering.

"It is over now," Elsie said, struggling to compose herself, and leaving the bed, she passed to and fro in the room, her lips moving, but her voice inaudible. At length an expression of calmness came over her face, and her eyes rested steadfastly on the floor, as though some questionable and agitated point had been decided in her mind. On the appearance of her mother, with a salver of tea, and the daintiest food, she betrayed no emotion, but acknowledged the kindness with a smile, and

ate, as if there were no fires now in her brain, nor shadows on her heart.

"You will sleep to-night," said her affectionate nurse, as she arranged the bed and smoothed the pillow, "and in the morning feel almost well."

"Yes, I shall be better to-morrow!" she answered, but lifted not her eyes to those of her mother, nor seemed inclined for further conversation; she only rested her head on the table, by which she sat, watching the embers—now sending up a flickering and sudden flame, and now mouldering and dim—studying prophecies in the fleeting pictures there, which none but she could see.

But though the silence imported a willingness to be alone, it was not understood. "What are you thinking of, my daughter?" the mother asked, playfully patting her colorless cheek, as she sat down beside her.

"I was making the embers tell my fortune," she replied, "but it is very dark." There was an earnestness in her tone, indicative of the interest, if not faith, felt in the test to which she thus silently submitted the questions of her destiny.

Suddenly a little flame quivered upward, and grew stronger, till the room was full of light.

"Thank God!" then she said, "the light will come at last;" and for a moment a gleam of satisfaction played on her features, which the mother

saw, and smiled, saying, "I did not know, my child, you had so much of my foolish superstition. To-day the black cock perched himself on the dead bough of the elm at the door, and crowed several times. 'If he crow again,' I thought, 'Elsie will get well, and we shall be so happy.' I knew it was an idle fancy, a mere chance, and yet my work fell from my hands, and I listened with a deeper anxiousness, daughter dear, than I can make you understand."

"And did he crow as you hoped?" asked Elsie, her voice trembling with eagerness and fearful apprehension.

"Oh, I forgot till this moment," replied the mother, unpinning and pinning again a small black shawl she wore about her shoulders, and either not hearing or affecting not to hear the question, "I forgot to tell you, Elsie, that John Dale was here again this afternoon to ask how you were—poor fellow!"

Elsie moved uneasily, but said nothing, and the mother continued, as she placed the embers in a heap, and set aside the great brass andirons, for which there was no use now: "He had been to make the last payment on his farm, and seemed in fine spirits."

"Then the cock did not crow again!" and she turned her face from the eyes of her mother and

the blaze which had flashed more brightly, toward the dark.

"Next summer he will build a beautiful cottage—the cage before the bird, you know."

"What if I let go the bird i' the hand, and found none in the bush?" said Elsie, rather to herself than to her mother.

"What, dear child?"

"Nothing; I was only repeating a line I have read somewhere;" and she seemed absorbed in melancholy musing a moment, and then added, "John is a good young man, and I hope he will be very happy."

"But you will not help to make him so?" And though the question was lightly asked, Elsie appeared to think there was serious meaning in it, and answered sorrowfully, that he had her prayers and good wishes, but for anything beside it was too late.

"Yes, he is a good young man, as you say, and dear, he likes you as he does no one else;" and in turn the mother spoke sadly. "What time is it, my daughter?"

"I wish it were morning," said Elsie—for the wretched are apt to imagine another time and place will be better. But it is hard to fly from ourselves:

"Still, still pursues, where'er we be,
The blight of life, the demon thought."

"I wonder when you will be able to go to town?" the mother asked; "in two or three days?"

"Oh yes, I am sure I shall be well enough," and for the first time that night there was a true earnestness in what she said. A thousand undefined hopes sprang into life at a thought of going to the city. He to whom she was speaking, when first we saw her, was there; she would see him, and hold his hands in her own, and look into his eyes, and call him dear Nattie; and what more could she desire? She did not ask whether he would call her "dear Elsie;" she did not care.

The matron continued her silent musing; but her thoughts were not of "Nattie," they were of the new dress and bonnet which Elsie should wear at Mary Crane's wedding, where she would be sure to meet John Dale.

"Oh, yes, I should like so much to go to town—it would make me well, I know!" and, almost trembling, she awaited a reply, saying she felt better that night.

"What a blest medicine of pain is a sweet hope!"

Little cared she for the new dress, though well she knew what hopes and wishes were in her mother's heart. She had as yet used no artifice to deceive, and with this, but without any attempt at undeceiving, she tried to quiet her conscience.

With what shallow arguments we strive to build our weakness into strength!

After the first little swerving from right, the step into positive wrong is easy, and the next descent, and the next, and the next, easier still, till there rises between our sinking feet and the daylight of beauty and innocence, a mountain of darkness, as a curse, against which the soul has no power to rise. Such conviction—fruit of the knowledge of good and evil planted in every heart—swept at times the consciousness of Elsie, darkening away the light of peace, as the whirlwind buries blossoms in dust, or a cloud covers the stars.

In vain she tried—there was no avenue of escape. When her little brother climbed on her knees, and kissed her, again and again, she smiled, and would have answered his caresses as fondly, yet her arms clasped themselves coldly and weakly about his neck. She had never loved him more, never so much, as now, but his innocent love was a reproach, and she grew dumb before him.

They called her changed, and abstracted—softer names for coldness and selfishness—but could they have seen the bleeding heart, with its yearning but repressed affections, over which the smile beamed so faintly, and the silence brooded so coldly, the harsh judgment must have been unspoken, and reversed.

When the boy left her she called him back, and when he came she sent him from her, gazing on him with looks intensely mournful, such as the mother gives a child from whom death is pressing her away. "Mother!" she called often, and when her mother came, there was nothing she would have, but sometimes she would hide her face, and ask forgiveness for the trouble she had caused, and again look on her with such beseeching earnestness as cannot be described with any words. So the days and the nights went by, and the lover came not, nor sent any token of remembrance; but forsaken and wretched as she was, Elsie grew calmer and stronger. She had resolved on her course.

No life is utterly joyless that is subject to a great purpose. The Will has something of that power the Master said belonged to Faith, to which it is related so nearly as often to be distinguished from it only with great difficulty. The schoolmen have debated of it much, and many hold that it must bend to other forces; but from all that I have read in histories, or seen in life about me, Will is sovereign over everything but God, whose own most fit description is the HIGHEST WILL. Into the heart and brain of Elsie came suddenly this inspiration, and she looked bravely out on her future, from the sight of which she before shrank

appalled ; and she saw the mountains moving, and day again, brighter and fairer for the blackness and terror of the receding night, blooming and shining, far, far away, to where it mingled with the eternal light.

CHAPTER VI.

If hearty sorrow
Be a sufficient ransom for offense,
I tender it here; I do as truly suffer
As I did e'er offend.

SHAKESPEARE.

"CAN my poor words and weak faith have afforded any consolation or comfort?" said Nathan Warburton, speaking to himself, as he sat in his handsomely furnished apartment the evening after the funeral. An expression of sad solemnity came over his face, his eyes moistened, and he pulled the leaves from a monthly rose that was on the table by his side, and crushing them, one by one, dropped them at his feet.

"What am I doing, and to what am I tending?" he said. "Am I not proud, and self-willed, deficient in religious feeling, and weak in every principle and stay of virtue? To others I say 'Be as rocks, against temptation,' when myself am a very reed. Men and women, infinitely better than I, come around me and praise me for intellect and

eloquence and goodness—have I either? If it be true that I was made to influence men's characters and lives, as sometimes I am half persuaded by this applause, how terrible a responsibility! God, my Father! how awful thine ultimate anger, or how sweet thy dear approval! Before it is forever too late, can I not subdue this rebellious heart, and crush out its defying and damning pride?"

His flushed warm brow, in which the veins were now distended till they seemed like chords that lashed him to madness, was leaning in his palm, and for a while he was silent; but his turbulent thought again became coherent, and in a soft and melancholy monotone he went on, with a sincerity possible only, perhaps, in solitary self examination:

"I preach repentance to others, when all I have ever felt needs to be repented of. When life is gay about me, and the sunshine of prosperity is over all, the questionings of conscience are less distinct; but when the world dwarfs in this funereal silence, and the joyous light, and the laughing wind, are stayed back by the pall, Satan binds my hands, and the demons torture me as they will."

Again he paused, but in a little while he said, "Prayer is a sharp weapon, before which they cannot stand," and, falling on his knees, he besought that the arms of everlasting love might be about him, and lift him above the low temptations

of passion, into the serene comfort and confidence of a religious life. •

As he arose his countenance wore the expression of one exhausted with some terrible conflict, of one neither victorious nor yet wholly baffled. He thrust away the hassock on which he had been accustomed hitherto to kneel, as though sin were in its use, and with a look in which there was more of disdainful pride than of humility, stript off from one of the fingers of his left hand two rings, the glitter of which had long been pleasant to his eyes, and cast them from him as one would shake off a serpent. Passing the sumptuously cushioned chair in which he usually read, he seated himself in that which he least liked, and taking up a Book of the Martyrs, was presently absorbed in its histories of torment and triumph, of wrestling and peace.

The wings of his faith expanded and grew strong in the glow of old inspirations, as do those of a young bird in the warmth and light of the sun; and thought went upward with braver and braver sweep and confidence, till the rack and the thong lost their terror, and it seemed a little thing to die for that religion for which he could not live.

What contradictions are in the best of us, what blendings of weakness and strength, of timidity and courage!

"A gentleman is waiting below, sir," and the servant who made the announcement bowed deferentially, as he paused for a reply.

"Show him up," said the clergyman, without raising his eyes; but the man hesitated, half believing he must have misapprehended the words—unaccustomed to receive so direct and simple a reply to similar announcements; for, if no card were sent, Mr. Warburton was usually particular in his inquiries whether the person waiting were a gentleman, or had a plebeian air; and no matter who came, friend or stranger, unless he was in a genial mood, which was not very frequently the case, the servant had directions to say he was not at home; therefore it was no marvel he felt some surprise at an answer and a manner which seemed to indicate a new humor in his master, or an unprecedented caprice.

As the door reopened, and the stranger, a young man of shuffling gait and uncouth appearance, presented himself, an habitual smile of cold disdain was visible, and, half rising, without offering his hand, the preacher waited with a sort of impatient civility for the intruder to make known whatever business had brought him there.

"I have the honor of speaking to Mr. Warburton?" he said, advancing, with awkward embarrassment.

A slight inclination of the head was the only answer.

"My name is Arnold—Joseph Arnold." The preacher bowed again, and his smile, as he pointed to a seat, was a little more placid.

But without accepting the proffered courtesy, the young man said he had that day had the happiness of listening to his wise counsel and moving eloquence, such as could have come only from one equally eminent in capacities and purity of heart, and he had taken the liberty he supposed was warranted by Mr. Warburton's profession, of seeking an interview, the pleasures and advantages of which would, of course, be his only. He trusted to Mr. Warburton's goodness for such conversation as would strengthen the resolutions induced by the impressive beauty of the day's public discourse.

"You are quite too flattering," the reassured and now placable minister said, rising, and drawing the easy chair near his own—for flattery seldom falls on such stony ground as to be wholly choked out. And as the stranger seated himself, he continued to say that, if his poor ability had afforded a moment's gratification or induced a single resolve of duty, he had over-payment for all the suffering and sorrow the day had cost him.

Arnold smiled, for if there were some truth in the words, he could not but be aware of much

exaggeration in them, and he said he had only ability to appreciate what was fine in other men, without power of originating anything himself; but that, if he might venture an opinion, he would say the pleasure of creating, even aside from the conviction of the happiness it gave others, must be infinitely superior to every other.

"Doubtless, you are in some sort correct. Genius must be its own reward. But after all, it is only a bright curse, which, as it dazzles, bewilders and blinds. I, however," he said in a subdued tone, "am not a man of genius, but merely a simple clergyman, whom few have heard of, and whose highest praise is that he has some earnestness in his vocation. For the goodness you attribute to me—God help me! I am not good."

"A sweet fountain sendeth not forth bitter waters, nor a bitter fountain sweet waters," said Arnold; "and the good words as well as the good acts of a life are fruit of the promptings of the heart."

"True: good thoughts must have preceded good words, at some time; but they may rise, like the delicious cream, spreading themselves on the surface, and leaving the under current worthless, at best. We cannot accurately judge of what is hidden by what is seen. My theory is that, even in the best natures, the stars stand still some-

times, in the horoscope of love, and the cold light of intellect is mistaken for their radiance."

"We must not expect perfection," Arnold said, "and, after all, it is not desirable, unless the whole world were regenerated, for so soon as we attained it our work here would be done. If you were altogether good, for instance, how could you soften your speech to the condition and necessities of the bad; how could you reach the sinful or suffering? How could you know their necessities, if lifted, as it were, out of our common humanity?"

"Our great example of perfection went about doing good."

"Yes; but he was divine, and yet subject to the temptations of mortality, that he might minister to mortal weakness, though, in his divinity, strong enough to resist. The light given to guide us must be broader and higher than that within ourselves, else we had no need of it at all."

"But when, overcome by temptation, we seal our doom, what motive have we to do good any more?" And the preacher spoke as one might who felt himself lost.

"There is none utterly lost—at least not here; but a future, into which we may go through the gate of repentance, where the past, however dark,

may be fought down. Weak, sinful as we are, we are still almost omnipotent."

Warburton smiled.

Arnold continued: "There is more goodness in the world, more religion in the world, than men are apt to believe. Did you ever proclaim a lofty sentiment without seeing the light of approval kindled in every countenance before you? Trust in ourselves, and in human nature, is what we need."

"Can the reed defy the storm?" said Warburton; "or can he trust in himself, whose intellect enables him to perceive that which his heart does not feel?"

Arnold smiled in turn. There was really no clashing in their theories, and each talked for the sake of drawing out the other. The difference in their natures was, perhaps, that Arnold did not mark out a course, and say this conduct will make me a friend, and the friend will help me to some object near my heart, therefore I will pursue it; but more readily than Warburton he was apt to seize whatever advantage came in his way, because of his lower pride, and his inferior care for the opinions of the world. I say lower pride, because he had pride of a certain sort—a pride in seeming unlike other men, in despising gentlemanly behavior, and in affecting indifference to wealth and

social elevation—a very common and a very ignoble pride, scarcely compatible with any genuine bravery or virtue; while that of Warburton was in all respects essentially different. In the ability of other men to stand alone, to battle with circumstances and warp them to their will, Arnold had some confidence, though not all he affected; but in his own powers he had little faith, and no energy to push that little into action, but was always going outside of himself, and indolently leaning on some one, leaving the mind which he really possessed to rust out unused.

Quick to recognize and appreciate talent, and feeling, sometimes, conscious of equality with the most brilliant persons into whose society he was brought by chance or a momentary ambition, indolence, ignorance, hopelessness, and diffidence, all kept him down. He could feel what he could not say—as Warburton could say what he could not feel.

Never, perhaps, in his life, had he acted out his nature more truly than to-day, in the various incidents connected with this visit, the cost of which to him no one might guess. Thrice at least he passed the clergyman's house, for though he hated the formula of life, and before a great mind bowed in unaffected homage, diffidence and a mortifying sense of his uncouth person and rude breeding

kept him back till, at length, defying himself, as it were, and, it may be, irresistibly attracted by some sort of affinity of soul, he sought and obtained this interview; and there never had been and might never be again in the course of the clergyman's life an hour he could have selected more wisely for his purpose.

There are processes, it is said, by which fire can be drawn from ice; there are influences, superhuman almost, to break the power of custom, and strip naked the soul before the eyes of our fellows, resist as we may. Only in certain states of feeling, and when time and place and circumstance are all propitious, may such things be, yet all of us at one time or another, in affairs of trivial or of great importance, are apt to feel in such combinations the inevitable power of a destiny.

Thus these two natures, laying off some of their pretenses, met and mingled.

"I was engaged with this book," said Warburton, turning the lettering toward his new acquaintance and breaking the silence, which was becoming embarrassing; "I was engaged with this book, on your entrance, and debating with myself whether one might not even become a martyr for the religion he could not or would not practice in his daily life."

Arnold looked embarrassed, and he continued:

"A mad enthusiast, fancying wings of flame most fit to bear a sinful soul to heaven—a man of strong prejudice, rather than of strong faith, might make this awful sacrifice as a testimony of feeling, or an atonement for sin; or some, even, for the glory of a name, register it in everlasting fire."

He paused a moment, and then continued, sorrowfully, and as if speaking to himself, "There is light, even in the religious walks of life—light guiding to good deeds and great sacrifices—which falls not from the beams of the cross."

He seemed gazing in upon his own soul, as he spoke, but presently, as if ashamed of his ill-concealed emotion and partial confession, he directed the conversation in a new channel, where it flowed in a light, sparkling current, for which Arnold had no capacity, and he therefore shortly took his leave.

Warburton said, when he was left alone, "It is a pity he has not more gentlemanly accomplishments, but he has the same claim upon man and God as I, or any one, and it is possible that in all things to which we may be tempted by ambition he will surpass me, though I were ten times as proud, fastidious, and skilled in the commonplaces of the world."

He said rightly. Whatever the past, while the

mind and physical energy fall not yet to ruins, we may go through the gate of repentance, and shape our future as we will.

“Elsie, dear, forsaken Elsie! out of your love I will crown myself, and your purity and innocence shall be my guide.”

CHAPTER VII.

Thou art forgotten, thou whose feet
Were listened for like song,
They used to call thy voice so sweet—
They did not miss it long.

L. E. L.

I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man miss me more.

SHAKESPEARE.

POETS may talk of the fidelity of love—of its indestructible nature—but we are faithless, at best, and thrice faithless to the dead.

The grass creeps not so softly nor so soon over the grave as forgetfulness over the heart. Not positive forgetfulness, perhaps, but alienation and indifference. For a time the wing of Death puts out the sun, and blank, dumb, helpless apathy, paralyzes the energies of life.

A beloved one—mother, or sister, or child—is gone, they tell us, gently as may be, and pointing our thoughts to the heaven where they never are sick, or weary, and never are parted from dear ones any more; but what words of comfort may

avail! we feel only the awful separation, and in that there is all sorrow and all pain.

The locks are combed smooth and the feet straightened, and strong hands with the mattock and the spade fashion in an hour the "narrow house." Our lips whiten and our hearts stand still, as our clinging arms are forced away and the shroud is folded about the ruins of mortality. Scarcely have we strength to pray.

The clouds are over the coffin, and there comes a sense of relief. We return to our homes; and whatever belonged to the dead, the chair in which she sat, the book she read, the bed or the cradle in which she slept—all are hallowed to us, and for a while cherished as precious mementos. But day after day the sunshine falls, and the shadow grows less and less heavy, the expulsive power of new interests comes in, the accustomed chair has a new occupant, new eyes are lingering in the book, and thenceforth everything is linked with new thoughts. Other lips pronounce the words of the bards, and the old tones, that made them music, fade away from the memory.

So, by little and little, the waves of time widen between us and the lost, till they become a great sea, across which our thoughts but now and then are wafted by some tempest of the heart.

"Oh! what are thousand living loves
To one that cannot quit the dead?"

Thus writes a poet, who should have known more of the conditions of human feeling. The dead, if they loved us in life, we can give up ; our souls have been sheltered in their bosoms, the dew of their garlands has fallen on our brows ; we have been blest, and the blessing is undying in our recollections of its beauty and sweetness.

And, even if we love without love, and our heart-yearning is "a voice of music uttered to the blast, and winning no reply," what can come between us so fitly as the grave?

Better for our peace that the soul's melody be hushed into silence by the hand of death than that it waken to the touches of another. This thought, that we are spared the hardest agony of all to bear, is some mitigation of our wo. It is the dead to whom we are faithless. Wailing to ourselves, and with feeble and faltering steps, we follow the smile that is our heart's star, across all the wild mountains and waste deserts of life.

A week was gone by, and the blinds were open again, and the servants busy about the house, arranging and reàrranging, preparing breakfasts and dinners, nibbling in the pantry, and jesting and laughing with each other, as though their mistress were still the presiding genius of the place.

Margaret, as the chief domestic had formerly

been called, had intimated that it would be just as easy to address her as Mrs. Goodell, which gave infinite delight to those over whom she had authority. But the rod she swayed was not of iron, and though they laughed and took occasions much oftener than necessary to say "Mrs. Goodell," they could not choose but love her, for her severest reproof was never more than a sweet and subdued expression of surprise.

If the maid had carelessly overturned the urn of hot coffee in her lap, she would have only said, "Why, Mary!" or "How unfortunate!"

The nurse, since she had fully stepped into her new position, she called for the most part, "My dear," and in her most patronizing moods, "My dear child."

This was not particularly agreeable to Miss Crum, who was a woman of some spirit, and she retained alone the old habit of saying "Margaret." She was sure she was not spited at any body for a wind-fall, though she had never met any good fortune herself that she did not honestly earn; but if some persons were disposed to take airs on themselves, she didn't know as she was bound at all to recognize and humor their foundationless pride.

If Mrs. Goodell went out to buy a yard of tape, she was sure her duties to the baby required *her* at

home, though some folks had plenty of time to waste in shopping. If the tea chanced to be weak, it was never so in Mrs. Wurth's time; if strong, poor Mr. Wurth would be a ruined man if such extravagance continued to be indulged. But she didn't know why she should care; in fact, she didn't; she was very foolish for saying anything about it, and almost wished she had neither eyes nor ears.

In this unamiable state of feeling, she one day sat in her own room, contemplating, by way of soothing her feelings, perhaps, though the association would scarcely be supposed to have that effect, the worsted dog, now completed and lying on her knees, when, tapping lightly on the door, but without waiting an answer, Mrs. Goodell entered. She was smiling as usual, not graciously, not benignly, but as though really contented and happy.

The two great trunks containing the black silk dress, silver spoons, and other valuables, were in one corner of the room, and with them a band-box, in a calico sack. Miss Crum didn't care how much rubbish the housekeeper put in her apartment, and the housekeeper had been too busy to attend to the removal of the things till now.

Unloosing from the confinement of its tape-string the aforesaid calico sack, she took the lid from the band-box and examined whether the bonnet were

in a good state of preservation, saying it looked just like poor Mrs. Wurth, and she could see her with it on. She then reclosed the box, tied close the string about the mouth of the sack, and with a step so light that it seemed to fall on heather, bore her treasure away to a small upper chamber, called the servant's spare bedroom. As she passed the nurse, who chanced to sit in the way, she held it aside, greatly more than was necessary, that it might not disarrange her very gracefully disposed skirts.

"You needn't be afraid of me, Margaret; I am not poison," said that dignified and amiable personage.

"Why, Miss Crum, dear child! I know you are not poison. If I disturb you, I will not remove the other things; but I wished to put everything to rights before tea."

Miss Crum drew her chair aside, and asked what was going to happen—curiosity for the moment getting the better of her ill humor. .

"Oh, nothing," said Margaret; "a gentleman is coming to tea, that is all."

"Good heavens! what a great simpleton you are!" And more than the original spiteful harshness of the nurse returned, or would have done so, but for a second thought.

"Why, Araminta Crum!" exclaimed the house-

keeper, and with her customary sweet smile, and light step, the happy woman bore off the box.

When she returned, Miss Crum expressed herself delighted that the ugly old trunks were to be taken away. They harrowed up her feelings, she said, and made her irritable and nervous; and when they had been unlocked and seen into a little, as Mrs. Goodell expressed it, she voluntarily assisted in removing them into the spare room—a task difficult of accomplishment, but finished, at last, by dint of hitching them, with interludes for the recovery of breath, from step to step up the stairs.

“Do you know who is coming?” asked the nurse, carelessly.

“Really, child, I did not inquire, but think it's the doctor. He often takes tea with us of a Wednesday night.”

“With *us*!” thought Miss Crum, but she wisely forebore to speak it, and saying she would prefer that it were anybody else, skipped into her own room, with the alacrity of sixteen, and began the most active preparations.

Meantime Margaret made the rounds of the house, by way of getting all in perfect order before the gentlemen should come in.

Sometime previous to the appointed hour Miss Crum was duly arrayed. Her stiff curls were drawn out to their greatest length, and as smooth

—as they ever were. The blue ribbons of the cap were exchanged for white ones, and the black silk dress for one of pea-green. The lace points of the petticoat were just the least bit visible, and as she surveyed herself in the glass an expression of satisfaction lighted her face that really made her look quite pretty—"nice as a new pin," as Margaret said when, having completed her own toilet, she came up to hook the pea-green frock.

"Thank you, Mrs. Goodell," Miss Crum said when the task was ended, and forthwith began chattering like a magpie.

She was even more satisfied than before, on seeing the housekeeper's plain appearance, for Mrs. Goodell had simply tied on a clean gingham apron, and made some little effort, useless all, to comb her thin and faded tresses across the great bald spot on the top of her head.

"I will just give the baby a few drops of paregoric," said the nurse, bending over the cradle and praising the beautiful black hair of the child, which she had not noticed before—"for I might want to stay below a little after tea, one gets so lonely in one's own room always."

"Why, Miss Crum, you will not give the baby laudanum!" and the housekeeper took the vial from her hands, as she held the teaspoon ready for the slow and careful dropping. "Dear child, that

will never do. I will come up and take care of the little darling." And she fondled it and called it a thousand pretty names, hugging it close, and kissing it over and over, as though she had rescued it from some terrible peril, which, in truth, she had.

"Children that are well and healthy, like this precious 'tittle mousey," here she squeezed the innocent more tightly than ever, "will sleep enough, Miss Crum. Oh yes, him sleep enough, don't him?" here followed another kiss, after which she related many instances of death or idiocy produced by giving bad medicines to such infants.

Miss Crum acknowledged the wisdom of her caution, though she would probably have been highly indignant at such an invasion of her peculiar province, but for anticipations of a display of her attractions to some purpose at the tea-table. As Margaret laid the child in the cradle, rocking it to and fro the while with motherly fondness, she said she had dreamed of cats the night before, and to dream of any of the feline tribe was one of the worst signs that could be—indicating danger to some of the household, and the shedding of many tears.

Miss Crum smiled, little thinking that she would verify both these bad omens. How could she? for ere the smile faded the door-bell rang, and leaning over the banister she saw a gentleman, who in-

quired for Mr. Wurth and was shown into the parlor.

"How are you, Frederick?" and "Ah, Joseph, glad to see you," were the familiar and cordial salutations of the friends.

That Mr. Wurth did not say, "Devilish glad to see you, Jo," and that Arnold took the hand of his friend, instead of slapping him on the shoulder and calling him Fred, was attributable to the recent melancholy event in the family, but this was all the change discernible in the method or manner of either.

The sorrow, the change, apparently were regarded but as a vacuum around which to talk. And Joseph Arnold, as he conversed with his rich, indolent friend, and glided into his more habitual feeling and action, could hardly have been recognized as the person who conversed so gravely and religiously with the clergyman. In allusion to his visit, he spoke lightly, and as if he had been prompted by curiosity rather than any deeper feeling, calling Mr. Warburton that white neckclothed fellow who visited the consumptive lady, but adding, "There are more things in the heaven and earth of that man's mind than are dreamed of in the philosophy of most of us."

At the door of the tea-room Miss Crum appeared, all smiles, at the precise juncture most appropriate,

and vanished again like the creature of a dream. A servant was sent for her, but she had a nervous headache, and begged to be excused.

"Why, Miss Crum!" exclaimed the housekeeper, as she presently entered the nursery.

For some mysterious cause, the pea-green silk had been hastily thrown aside, and arrayed in a long loose gown, and with her face muffled with a towel, Miss Crum sat, swaying from side to side, as if repressing by such action some extraordinary emotion.

Noting the preparations for a storm of tears, the housekeeper wisely and silently withdrew.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALONE, in her dark sorrow
Hour after hour went by.

WHITTIER.

And he did calm himself
And fix his brow into a kind of quiet.

BROWN.

AND so, while Miss Crum indulged her sudden mood, jostling the cradle now and then with one foot—and the two friends conversed, if not gaily, at least cheerfully, as they partook of a luxurious dinner—Wurth acquiescing generally in the suggestions of Arnold, partly that he was too indolent to think for himself, and partly from a good natured disposition to please—the young clergyman was preparing to dine with the governor of the state, at whose table he expected to meet several other distinguished persons. There was yet a little time before that set in his invitation, and he drew his easy chair near the fire, and rested his elbow on the table of carved rose-wood, on which blank paper, unfinished manuscripts, engravings, pam-

phlets, and two or three large and richly bound volumes of theology—from their appearance, “a little heavy, if no less divine”—were strewn in disorder. It might have been observed that the two rings sparkled, as of old, on the left hand, on which, just now, his head reposed, and here and there a silver thread might have been seen among his dark thick hair, though he could not yet have passed the age of twenty-five.

His toilet had been carefully made, the white neckcloth arranged with tasteful precision, and the black coat was without so much as a fleck of lint; and his kid gloves and rose-scented cambric handkerchief were on the table. For days past he had been doing penance, but his gray eyes still glittered from within the black lashes around them, though the lids had a bluish tint, and drooped more than was their wont.

His haughty expression of self-reliance was changed and faded, as it were, to one of dissatisfied, questioning, and helpless endurance.

He was half-resolved, even yet, to send an apology and remain at home, for well he knew the weakness of his heart, and feared the customary influences of such scenes would have their usual effect of leading his affections to “the world.”

From an antique writing-case, of costly and elaborate workmanship, he drew a miniature portrait,

turned the face to the light, looked at it intently, rather than fondly, kissed it calmly, and replaced it.

"My life henceforth," he said, "must conform to the rules I have laid down, and to the law God has given. The path is open before me, wherein duty, religion, every thing, urge me forward; and however rough and obscure, however much the stones bruise my feet and the thorns tear my flesh, I will not linger nor turn aside."

Before a picture of the death of St. Stephen, he knelt and besought strength and grace from our Father in Heaven. But it was not prayer—only sentences built up with artistic skill, inlaid with poetic thoughts and pleasant fancies—beautiful, indeed, but cold, and empty of the eloquence of feeling. When he arose there was no peace in his heart, no shining in his face, as of one fresh from the presence of Divinity.

He had been goaded by conscience into the exercise of a formula. He had performed a task, and, when there came no answer, he went forth to dissipate the trouble of his soul in the atmosphere of a refined and brilliant society.

Away over the city the sunset glorified the yellow woods, and illumined, with purple and crimson, the bordering clouds that edged the blue, filling the chamber with rosy shadows, where the ancient nurse rocked the cradle of the little child—a lovely

embodiment of innocence, the eyes fast shut, and the soft dimpled hands laid together. How often, in after years, those hands were locked in the agony of a broken heart—the horror of a tortured soul! Rosy shadows of sunset! could you not kiss that quiet sleep to endless repose?

The house in which Mr. Warburton was become a guest, with its marble porticos, lofty ceilings and rich furniture, I need not describe; nor its aristocratic surroundings, nor the gay party assembled in its drawing-room—men and women, well born, of high education, and affluent leisure; nor yet the viands and wines, nor the services of Sèvres porcelain—every piece a gem of art—nor those of gold, and silver, exquisitely wrought.

The conversation was for the most part trivial and lively, but not without flashes of genius, and that intellectual tone which marks the most casual discourse of clever and refined men, no matter of what subjects. I need not, as I said, describe all this, though it served to widen the distance which separated the strong-minded man of the world—who sought and found in it a temporary forgetfulness of the past—from the young and artless country girl whose life and endless destiny, perchance, he carried carelessly the while in his brain.

On their iron path, cut deep through mountains of rock, or stretching over vast and nearly level

fields, or amid villages, or sweeping under dark and heavy arches, that obscured not only the sunshine but the daylight, thundered on the cars, fast and faster, toward the tumultuous and ever-absorbing city.

What strange diversities of interest, hope and fear, pleasure and pain, gayety and despair, were in its myriad habitations, or its streets. There sat the care-worn mother, watching in tearless agony the departure of the soul of her only child, and a little way beyond a maiden singing from her heart the gayest songs; there want was gnawing with sharp fangs the vitals of his victims, and in the next chamber a red faced epicure was heavy with a surfeit of luxuries; there lusty youth, ill-mannered in some quest engrossing all his thought, jostled decrepit age, sans everything but a tenacity of existence; in each second some frame was stirred with every emotion, every vicissitude, every experience, that belongs to human life.

In the motley crowd which occupied one of the cars sat a young girl, in a gray dress, and close-fitting bonnet. She seemed quite alone, neither noticing nor noticed of any one. One hand, small, brown with the sun, and hardened by toil, rested on the willow basket at her side, and now and then she wiped her eyes with a white silk handkerchief, bordered with pink flowers.

Her face was turned nearly all the while to the window, and a veil so completely hid it that, whether she were plain or beautiful might not be guessed farther than by the general outline, which indicated extreme youth and slight and graceful proportions.

The villages grew thicker, forming almost a continuous street; and with every pause of the train the girl looked eagerly about, till the conductor announced the place of the momentary detention, when she again turned to the window, and seemed lost in thought.

Slower moved the train, and slower; and houses, which were low and only seen at intervals, a little while ago, began to stand compact, and display a higher and nobler aspect. More and more persons appeared in the street, till gradually it was filled with an undistinguishable crowd; show-windows, illuminated with gas, were seen on either hand; great hotels, about which many men were standing, appeared; and hither and thither ran ragged boys, bearing great bundles under their arms, and crying the names of the papers of the evening.

The shadows grew darker and deeper; away down the long avenues shone the lamps; the motion ceased; "New York!" cried the conductor; and the rush and confusion of passengers, porters, and coachmen followed.

"Have a carriage, Miss? have a carriage?" "This way—right to the Washington;" "Straight to the United States;" "Shall I take your basket?—any baggage?" were the salutations which confounded and annoyed the inexperienced traveler, as, putting her veil a little aside, she timidly descended the steps, and threaded her unknown way amid the throng.

Outside the densest mass she paused, and an expression of terror came over her face, such as a child might feel when lost in the thick woods. A moment's hesitation, and she went forward, but as one who knew not whither her steps were tending. An old woman, wrapped in a black woolen shawl, sat at her apple-stand, nibbling a piece of cake, which she clutched, rather than held, in her withered fingers.

"Can you tell me, madam," said the girl, pausing before her, "where Mr. Warburton lives?"

"Who did you say, honey?" mumbled the hag-like creature.

The name was repeated more distinctly and loudly.

"No—well—I don't know as I do. I know a Mr. Warner, who sells oranges and cakes in the Bowery; he just passed here a bit ago, and gave me this for my supper," she said, showing the remnant of cake. "But I reckon maybe it is not him

you are in search of, so you had best go forward—you keep people from my stall."

"No, that is not the person, and for obstructing your customers I am very sorry." Then, slipping a sixpence into the hand of the woman, the girl passed on. It was some time before she found courage to repeat the question. No one seemed to notice her, and how could she obtain their attention? At length, however, she did so, though scarcely knowing to whom of the many persons about her she addressed herself. The nearest man shook his head, but made no other reply. She looked after him with beseeching earnestness, and then, wiping tears from her cheek, walked faster than before.

Seeing a narrower and less populous street, which crossed that in which she was walking, she turned aside, but with no very intelligible or definite aim. It was growing dark, and she began to experience a more dreadful sense of desolation.

Talk of loneliness, on the wild hills where no voice speaks but the wind's, where the long grass and the pleasant flowers tangle our footsteps, and the woodbird is startled at our approach! There is no loneliness—the soul mates itself with the stars or winds, and wanders at will through the universe, and no crushing sense of humility, of nothingness, weighs it down. The feeling comes to us most

oppressively in cities, as we pass among thousands, unnoticed and unknown. With our sorrowful isolation, a sense of unworthiness humbles us; we have no claims on any one, and yet feel wronged and insulted, as it were, that we are thus aside from the aims and interests of all about us. No one, I think, can find himself alone in a great city, for the first time, and not experience such a sense of lonesomeness as he has never before known, though he may have trodden the sands of the desert, sat in the solemn shadows of the pyramids, or been lost in the windings of wildernesses.

Before a small house, with a square yard in front in which grew some shrubs and green grass, a hearse was standing, and two men were bearing to it a large coffin covered with black cloth. The window-blinds of the house were close shut, and as the men disappeared through a side door, a little boy, with yellow hair, and one leg drawn up with disease, hobbled out, with the help of crutches, and turning about, peered earnestly within, probably attracted toward and yet repelled away from the dead.

A strange feeling came into the heart of the girl, as she stopped and looked; a new and bewildering sensation, but most unlike that fearful and painful one which had oppressed her when the neighbors whom she knew bore the red and naked coffin within the village graveyard at home.

A servant girl came hurriedly out, with a broom in one hand, and in the other a towel, which she put aside, and then shook the boy roughly, addressing some words to him in a harsh tone.

She then brought a chair, and though he was quite large, lifted him into it, and placing a handkerchief in his hands, left him sitting on the porch by the open door, where, as was evidently expected, he began to cry.

"His father or mother is dead, perhaps," the girl thought, and, with a heart aching for him, she went on.

At the street corner was an old brown pump, beside which stood a tall and awkward youth pumping water on his bare feet. To him her hitherto fruitless inquiry was addressed.

Taking from his trowsers pocket (his coat hung over the top of the pump) a yellow silk handkerchief, he wiped the perspiration from his face, for he had been hard at work, and surveying the girl, answered respectfully, that he knew no person of the name, but added in a moment, "It can't be the Rev. Mr. Warburton, can it?" and on receiving an affirmative reply he looked at the inquirer more curiously than before, saying, "If you will but step in this market-house of mine for a minute, I will show you where Mystery lives."

"You do not understand," said the girl, hesi-

tating, "it is Nathan Warburton whom I wish to find."

"Precisely—I understand, but you don't understand me; my physiognomy is not very pretty, but never mind, come in;" and he led the way into a small grocery, where eggs, butter, vegetables, and candies, were sold, and before which was the well.

Many books and papers were strewn about the chairs and counter, and a dozen pots of flowers, some of them in perfect bloom and exhaling an exquisite perfume, ornamented a rude table.

Placing the best chair near the door, he said, "So soon as I can arrange my underpinnings, I shall be ready," upon which he began drawing on his boots, and this done, "I have only to put on the roof," he said, taking up a fashionable hat, and then, having admired the flowers a moment, he led the way back into the street. The hearse was gone from before the cottage, and half way up the square, the pale boy, leaning on his crutches, gazed after it. "One of my tenants died here to-day," said the young man, looking in the direction of the house, "and that is his little grandson, Dandelion."

"An odd name," said the girl.

"I call him so for his yellow hair; I give every one a name indicative either of some trait of character, or of some personal beauty or blemish."

"And Mr. Warburton you call Mystery—why is

that? But do you see? you did not close the door of your grocery."

"No one will harm me; these steel hammers take care of my possessions;" and he presented a pair of large and ill-shapen hands, as he continued, "I call that preacher Mystery, because, though he is eloquent, and perhaps good, there is something dark in his nature—so thinks Moon-changer." And the green grocer drew himself up to his full height.

CHAPTER IX.

How we doth breed a habit in a man.

SHAKESPEARE.

*Go to the ant, thou sluggard, learn to live,
And by her wary ways reform thine own.*

SMART.

ABOUT a year after the events recorded in the last chapter, night fell upon two travelers in the vicinity of the "Queen City of the West." Both were seated outside the coach; both wore shaggy overcoats which seemed to have been made of the hide of some animal, and heavy boots suited to the rough and difficult ways through which, from their conversation, they appeared to have passed.

The horses were jaded, and plashed with mud, and a mist curled from their nostrils as they dragged the heavy vehicle along the ascent, terminating in a small village still some miles ahead, where relays were to be obtained. A yellow border of woods edged one side of the way, and along the other ran a creek, between high, steep banks, por-

tions of which were broken and hanging downwards, but kept together by roots and the grass with which they were covered, and thickly growing shrubs, that leaned to the water's edge. Here and there large masses had slid away, and borne with them trees, the tangled roots of which and the upturned earth about them made rude hillocks on shore, while the main portion of the trunk and half the broken boughs were sunken in the stream, sluggish and shallow now, but of much depth and turbulence in places, as the fallen timber indicated. A few intervals of clearing had been opened in the woodland, and cabins had been erected, the doors of many of which stood open, for the season was mild; and within them, lighted as they were by logs on the hearth and by candles, whatever work was going forward might be seen by every passer along the road. On such exposures of primitive and pioneer life one of our travelers commented largely for the amusement of himself and his friends.

In one dwelling sat the wife, midway between the door—from near which three or four urchins looked curiously at the stage-coach—and the fire, before which the good man lay stretched on the bare floor, and holding and playfully shaking the baby, almost above his head.

"Is that your mother?" asked one of the outside travelers of a slim-faced and red-haired boy, who,

bolder than the rest, sat astride the bars, endeavoring to count the passengers; "if it is, go in, for heaven's sake, and tell her to let that suffering child come out and see us."

"Yes, my little man, go and tell her, go," echoed the person at the side of the last speaker; "but I did not see," he continued, "what she was doing—pinching the child's ears?"

"No : she was combing its hair, and holding it between her knees, as in a vice, while it screamed lustily—I suppose to see the coach."

Our border mothers were not very particular about appearances, and if they combed their children's hair at all it was as likely to be at night as in the morning. There were some better dwellings, but not many, nor were the surroundings of these such as taste and refinement would dictate. Instead of a smooth grass plat in front, which would have cost little time or trouble, the ground was most likely to be covered with pig-sties, log stables for the horses, and rail pens for the calves. Indeed, one of the last achievements of civilization is that cultivation of trees and flowers, that tasteful elegance of arrangement, and neatness, which people who are poor, in town or country, persist in regarding as luxuries of the rich, though gentle natures always may have these blessings, without money, and almost without care, or any toil, if they

will. The road we describe was neither macadamized nor planked, and recent rains had so softened it that the motion of the coach made little sound, not enough to drown even the wild low music of the whippoorwills that to-night made all the woods vocal.

Just as the full moon pushed its red disk above the tree-tops, the eminence along which the horses had climbed so slowly was gained; the woods gradually thinned away into cultivated land; substantial houses were seen, with some, indeed, that might be termed elegant; the road, which had been narrow and uneven, widened to a smooth level, with strong fences on either side, instead of being open to the wood and water, as but a little distance back; the creek wound itself off among the hills and meadows; and wheat-fields, waving with their beautiful wealth, added at the same time to the picturesqueness and the appearances of thrift along the highway.

A mile in advance shone the village lights. The neighborhood had evidently within it a large degree of refinement, with means for the indulgence of elegant tastes. The horses trotted briskly to the whistle and whip of the driver, the sleepy passengers awoke, and there was a general hum of voices.

"Stop at the cross-roads," said one of the two

outside passengers, who had sat for some time silently and with folded arms.

"Is this the termination of our journey?" asked his companion, preparing to descend, as they reined up. "This is not your home, surely?"

"Yes, all the home I shall ever have;" and motioning the questioner to keep his seat, and directing the coachman where to set him down, he left his friend, and all the company, in silent speculation as to the significance of his proceeding.

The person thus unceremoniously deserted, turned backward and, leaning over the mail-bag, gazed earnestly on the moonlighted scene.

Two of the corners were open stubble fields: in one some cattle had made their beds; in the other nothing was visible save the guidepost, near the road, with its two strips of white board and black lettering, reaching toward the four points of the compass. In a third division grew clumps of walnut and maple trees, and near them stood a ruinous cabin, the roof sunken, the windows broken out, the door remaining open, and with a great heap of clay and stones where had been the chimney. And the last of the four looked dreariest of all, for there stood the ancient meeting-house, of rough stones, with its steep, mossy roof, double doors, and little prison-like windows. A few forest trees—oak, and elm, and walnut—stood about it, one or two so

near that their limbs creaked against the wall with every gust; and others were against the fences, and about the yard, which was ridged with the graves of those who in other years had gone there to sing psalms.

One monument, and only one, lifted itself proudly among the low head-stones half hidden in the long white grass. Sunken places among the mounds there were, holding their gloom away from the cold moonlight, with rough unlettered pieces of granite at the head and the feet; and around them curious school boys walked carefully when they came to read the names and dates, and simple legends, spelled by the homely muse, which were to the sleepers instead of fame, or more ambitious epitaphs, or elegies.

Very desolate and neglected the place seemed to be. Thistle-stocks and mullen-rods, dry and seedy, now grew between the graves; red briars crept along the walks; and brush-wood, and chance fragments of boards, and decayed posts, and rough strips of bark, had been used in mending the broken picket-fence; and over all streamed the moonlight, which, in itself, is melancholy.

While the old meeting-house was yet in full view, and the young man was still gazing back, the coachman checked his horses, saying, "This is where I was directed to leave you," and, with his luggage,

he was put down, outside the front gate of a comfortable looking farm-house.

Having seen his effects inside, he hesitated, not knowing how to proceed; and after a moment he seated himself on a block, to which was attached a chain, with its other end made fast to the gate and with a large weight in the middle, to draw the gate together as often as it should be opened.

While thus awaiting the approach of his friend, he surveyed the scene about him, more by way of amusing himself, than from any idle curiosity; for it mattered little to him whether he lived in a cottage or a castle, so that he found shelter and society, and a soft bed and well furnished table—which indeed he suspected were most likely to greet him in habitations somewhat more ambitious than the one by which he lingered.

A narrow path, strewn with pebbles and bordered with flowers, led from the gate to the house—a wooden building, two stories in height, and containing on the first floor, in front, two square rooms and an entrance hall. Sheltering the door was a small portico, having a very steep roof, supported by columns not much larger than a man's wrist, or rather by posts, and only two of these, one half of it resting against the house.

Curtains of green paper hung at the windows, but they must have been of little use, as each one

was rolled two thirds of the way from the sill of the window to which it should have served as a blind. In one of the upper chambers a light was burning, near which sat a woman, upright, and engaged apparently neither with books nor work, for her arms were folded together across her bosom. Her dress had the plain appearance which distinguishes that of a country girl, and her hair was combed straight back from her forehead.

A snug barn stood in the rear of the house, where horses were heard stamping, and about which cattle were seen standing or lying.

Near where the kitchen was supposed to be, for it was out of sight, an old fashioned well-sweep was seen, the proper balance of which there appeared to have been some difficulty in adjusting, as a portion of it had been hewn away—too great a portion, it seemed, from blocks of timber artificially attached, in various places, and a kettle of stones hung on the extreme lower end. The well-curb was all wrecked and gone, or nearly all, enough remaining only to tell where the well was, and on the grape-vine which served to lower it, swung the bucket, shriveled in the sun, and with the hoops almost fallen off.

The young man would gladly have entered the house, but for a belligerent guard, in the shape of a great yellow dog, whose low and warning growls

kept him still. Now and then he glanced at the lighted chamber, and smiled to see the upright woman, motionless as a corpse.

"Ah, Fred, here you are," said the deserter, pulling at the gate, which the stone weight made difficult to open. "I had forgotten all about you. How long have you been waiting?"

"Not more than two hours; but come, let's get in; I have looked at the exterior as long as I care to."

"Just wait till we settle that question. Two hours, you say, you have waited? No, Mr. Frederick, you know it is not more than one."

"You are right, Jo—just about one," answered Mr. Wurth, endeavoring to drag the trunk, while his friend, not inclined to assist him, but standing still, repeated, "No, it has not been an hour."

"Not quite an hour," echoed the yielding gentleman.

"I know that by the moon," said the first affirmative.

"Yes, I know 'it—by the moon, too," said the second affirmative; and then, taking up the trunk, the two walked toward the house.

They passed the front door, where all was dark and still, and also a side door of the rear building, which was but one story high, and contained a dining-room and kitchen. A light streamed from

the window of the last, revealing a group of which the chief personage seemed an exceedingly large and fat woman, who sat on the floor near the fire, picking leisurely at a fleece of wool which she held in her lap, and looking very good natured.

"My sister, Mrs. Yancey, Mr. Wurth," said Joseph Arnold, opening the door without having rapped, and before making any salutation on his own account.

"Why, Josey, is—is that you?" said the woman, rising from her recumbent posture as fast as her corpulency would permit; and, throwing her arms about him, she kissed him over and over, laughing all the while, and quite hiding a little active man, who, close behind her, waited his turn to give the strangers a welcome.

David, and John, and Maria, and two or three more, were then called up to shake hands with uncle Josey, and told to say "Yes sir, I thank you," when he asked them if they were well; after which they were required to shake hands with the other gentleman, and to say "Yes sir, I thank you," again; a performance which they seemed to dread, and which was soon accomplished, fortunately, as the active little man was kept in the background meanwhile.

"Nancy, Nancy," he exclaimed, at last, pushing himself in front of Mrs. Yancey; and taking or

rather seizing the hand of Arnold, he continued shaking it at intervals for five minutes, at first with great energy, which grew less with each renewal of the exercise.

The stranger then underwent a similar infliction, but somewhat more brief, and less violent. There was a heartiness in the tone of the little man, which made you both like him and feel at home with him in a moment.

"Nanny," called the fat woman to a pale and shy girl, of fourteen, who was rocking the cradle and looking in the fire, "go up stairs and tell Eunice that her brother has come." And, seating herself, this time on a chair, she said she was never so glad in all her born days, and ordered Johnny to carry her wool away, for she was going to enjoy herself.

"Where shall I put it, mother?" said the boy, taking it in his arms.

"Into the garret, or under the shed, or to any place that comes handy," the good woman answered, in a soft and loving tone.

"I will take care of it," interposed the active little man, who, with a market-basket on his arm, was exchanging whispers with the girl Nanny, in a corner of the room. These members of the family quickly disappeared, the sun-burnt face of the one shining with the sudden excitement, and the

colorless features of the other radiant for the moment with an expression of weighty purposes, which were soon to be realized for the satisfaction of all the party



CHAPTER X.

"Let all men know this, and keep it in mind always, that a single narrowest, simplest Duty, steadily practiced day after day, does more to support, and may do more to enlighten the soul of the Doer, than a course of moral philosophy taught by a tongue which a soul compounded of Bacon, Spenser, Shakspeare, Homer, Demosthenes and Burke, to say nothing of Socrates and Plato and Aristotle, should inspire."—CHRISTOPHER UNDER CANVAS.

"And some her frantic deemed, and some her deemed a wit."—CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

"The demon Indolence threats overthrow."—IRMA.

"BROTHER JOSEPH, I hope you are quite well," said a tall, dark young woman, coming forward with slow dignity, and presenting her hand, with a calm, placid smile, asking, as she did so, whether he had gained anything in mental stature since she last had the happiness of seeing him.

By something in the arrangement of her hair, and a peculiar perpendicularity, Mr. Wurth recognized her at once as the person he had seen while sitting on the block at the gate. Her manner and words manifested neither surprise nor joy, nor did she seem to feel any interest in the history of her brother, aside from what she termed that of his mental growth.

"Nancy, child," she said, but without looking at the girl, who had resumed her place by the cradle, "don't rock the baby : it will unsettle his mind, and destroy all his stability of character."

"Where did you learn that philosophy, Eunice?" asked Joseph, biting the smile off his lip.

"Nature," she said, "is my only guide—my only book. I have put aside all reading for the last year, so imbued is everything with false notions; and I may safely say I have grown more, mentally, in that time than during any of the previous five years of my life. Self-reliance, self-education, are what we need. But our highest interest, Joseph, is not understood, and the physical man, and the physical woman, too, (here she looked hard at the fat Mrs. Yancey), are fed to the neglect and starvation of the soul; for the mind and the soul are, sympathetically, one."

"Are they?" asked Joseph, quietly smiling.

"We must endure the burden of existence, while we are here," continued the sister; "but this is a troublesome and wicked world, at best, and we should all be thankful that we are so soon to be taken away."

"Really, you *have* had a mental advancement!" and the brother smiled, as before.

Disdaining the sarcasm, if she noticed it, the woman continued her discourse, observing that she

had formed a scheme, mentally, of which she had not hitherto spoken, inasmuch as her higher aims met no correspondence; but that she was assured of its feasibility, so soon as her mental attainment would justify attempting it. Her soul's energies, all her mental powers, were concentrated on the subject of the Indians. The rude, unsophisticated children of nature, she felt, would be as wax in her hands; but with civilized men, warped and dwarfed as their souls were, by false education, she wished to have nothing to do. In her brother she reposed some trust, and she hoped he would eschew the vanities of the world, and imitate her example, living thenceforward, for the mind. She concluded with an intimation that her self-communing had been interrupted by his coming, and that she must resume it for an hour, after which she would engage in sewing for the greater part of the night, as she was busily engaged in making unbleached cotton cloth into shirts for the Indians.

"I wonder how she got her cotton cloth," said Mr. Joseph Arnold, when she was gone. "I never knew her to earn money, and no one would be simple enough to give her any."

"Why, Josey, I can tell you," answered Mrs. Yancey, who had been edifying the stranger with the history of her courtship and marriage: "it was a piece William got for me to make up for the

children; but Euny wanted it so bad for the Ingens, that I let her take it; and I am half sorry," she added, "for we have lost one of our best horses, and our taxes were heavy this year, and it seems hard to get another piece." And Mrs. Yancey rocked to and fro, laughing the while with an expression of grim and unsatisfying humor.

"You were foolish, Nancy," said Joseph; "and the horse—it's a pity you should have lost him."

"He died suddenly," continued Mrs. Yancey, "and William thought it was from being overheated. Two little boys about the size of Johnny were here from town, along in August, and one dreadful warm day they made so much noise with their playing, I told them to go out and catch Tom, and ride, for their amusement; and all three mounted him at once, and made him run across the meadow, and up and down a steep hill, in the sun, till they found he was giving out. That night he would not eat, and in the morning the poor creature was dead."

The children fell asleep about the floor, for Mrs. Yancey liked to see children have their comfort, and never made a point of sending them to bed, or calling them up, before they were ready. Two or three cats were perched upon the table, and two or three more stretched at length on the hearth, enjoying the warmth of the fire.

One leg was off the table, and half the chairs were broken; the stove was cracked, and the door hanging by one hinge; the floor was dusty, and spotted with grease, and everything had a neglected and slovenly air.

"Mother, there is a nice fire in the other room. Wont you go in there, and the gentleman, and uncle Josey?" asked little Nancy, appearing at the door.

This room was no less shabby than the other—the carpet faded and soiled, the paper torn from the walls, the looking-glass broken, and every thing else in conditions to match. There were no cats on the table, but instead, some pretty plants, one of which grew in a brown earthen pot—the rest in broken tea-pots, sugar-bowls, and the like.

"Whew!" said Joseph, half whistling, as he saw the plants, "how do you chance to have these? I'd suppose you would think them too much trouble. How many varieties of cacti have you here?"

"Mrs. Yancey, who did not understand what was meant, said they belonged to Nancy; he must ask her. "She had a great many," she added, laughing, "but she went to see her cousin Reuben, last winter, and I forgot to bring them in, and they all froze."

"Nanny," called Joseph, "where did you get all those cacti?"

"I bought them in town," answered the girl, appearing at the kitchen door, her sleeves turned back from the wrist, and as if she were very busy.

Mr. Arnold doubtless expected her to manifest some astonishment at his plural termination of the name; and, though she did not, he repeated it, as if in admiration, saying, "Beautiful cacti!"

There were some peculiar forms of expression, for which he had an especial fondness. He liked to hear himself making use of them.

"Did you have any cholera, Josey, about where you were last summer?" asked Mrs. Yancey, in the same good-natured tone in which she said everything.

"Not a bit," was the reply. "I hoped it would come after the shooting season; we wanted something to enliven us."

"What a curious disposition you have," said the simple-minded woman; "most young men would not want the cholera to come near them."

"Yes, I often wished the cholera would come along," repeated the brother; "our caboose was dull enough when we had killed all the game within fifty miles of us. Just think what a caboose among red men would be, and in so vast a wilderness."

Mr. Joseph Arnold invariably said "red men," instead of Indians.

"What did you say was dull, Josey?"

"I don't know," said Joseph. "What were we talking about?"

"Why, about Indians and the cholera."

"Oh!" as if suddenly recollecting, "I was saying how dull our caboose was among red men, after we had killed all the game."

"What country were you in, Josey?"

"Just over here in Oregon," he replied, as though the distance were as nothing to him.

"That is a good long way off. I expect you have seen a hundred Indians there in a day, sometimes," and so she rambled, in her easy way, from one thing to another. She had no great hopes or fears, disappointments or sorrows, to serve as the subjects for her conversation.

She had indeed been a little slow in getting her wool picked, and William had the sheep sheared early too, but she had visited some, and received a good many visitors. One might as well live while they did live, she thought. Nanny was at school part of the time, and Euny thought more of her mind than her body, and so the summer was gone before she knew it. But after all, the long winter evenings would be a nice time to pick wool, and if the boys hadn't their new trowsers they couldn't wear them out. And she concluded with the comfortable reflection that William always got things in some way.

And, to verify her assurance, Mr. William Yancey came in while she spoke—his market-basket filled with various packages, such as grocers provide and housewives need. He looked worn down with excessive and protracted toil, but spoke in a cheerful tone, and seemed neither discouraged nor dissatisfied.

In spite of her want of management, Nancy was to him the best woman in the world; and now, as she offered him the rocking-chair, he declined with all the kindly gallantry which had characterized him as her lover.

"That is the way he always humors me, Josey," said Mrs. Yancey. "The other day I wanted to make some soap; it should have been made in April, to be sure, but in April I didn't feel like boiling soap, and William wanted to get my leeching-tub and kettle and all my fixings in the back yard, out of sight, because they didn't look pretty; but I told him I must have them in front, so, as I boiled my soap, I could see what was going on; but it's a pity I had it there, for the wind blew the blaze against a young tree and withered it to death; it was a tree that William thought a great deal of, too."

Cheerfully, almost gaily, talked the diminutive and amiable personage whom his wife called William, joining, as often as he could, in the conversa-

tion. There was a beautiful Eden just before him. Like the mariner of whom the poet sings :

“ In the night he spied a light
Shoot o'er the waves before him;”

and though he came never the nigher, he did not abandon that blest faith in time and energy which is all that redeems us from despair. Beautiful gift of our divine Father, how many souls are stayed up from anguish by its strength !

Presently after the coming home of the basket, Nanny appeared and arranged the tea-things, blushing all the while with a sweet and captivating timidity. She was fair and slight, with large melancholy eyes, a low musical voice, and a smile irresistibly winning. Duty in her hands became a pleasure, and young as she was, all the household care and a great part of its toil devolved on her. It was so natural and easy for Nanny to do this and that, her mother said, she herself seemed only in the way when she tried to assist; and Eunice had wisely concluded, in her higher mental development, that some persons had no mind at all, and labor was their only legitimate province.

Snow-white bread and golden butter, tarts, and cream, and many other delicacies, and substantial viands—all things on the table, indeed, were spread with tasteful care, and as the delicious fragrance of

the supper filled the room, Nanny skipped away to call her aunt Eunice.

When that lady came she brought her sewing, at which she continued to stitch all the while, only now and then sipping tea, or pausing to remark on the absurdity of eating at night, and its injurious effect on the mind.

This world and all its interests—railroads and telegraphs, bread and pie making, poems and histories, loves and marriages, no matter what was said of all or any of them, "What are they to me? or how will such conversation avail the growth of my intellectual organization?" was her only reply.

"Faith without works, is dead," said Joseph abruptly, as he balanced a slice of white bread on his fore finger.

"We all know that," said Mrs. Yancey.

"Yes, but what does he mean by it?" said Eunice, betraying a momentary feeling in the speculations of a worldling.

"Who made the warm fire? who prepared this nice supper?" asked Joseph, and repeated again "Faith without works is dead."

Mrs. Yancey laughed, Eunice frowned, and Nanny smiled gratefully, assured of a sympathy and friendliness between herself and her uncle Joseph.

CHAPTER XL.

His speech was a fine sample, on the whole,
Of rhetoric, which the learned call "rignarola."

BYRON.

I see a yielding in the look of France.

SHAKESPEARE.

SUCH was the home to which, after a year's roving life among the Indians of the far west, Arnold brought his friend for a summer's sojourn. True, he liked not either of the sisters much, but it was a place to which he could come freely when it pleased him, and where he could remain as long as he chose. He could throw himself on the divan or the carpet, and, to the astonishment of Mrs. Yancey, talk of the smart things he had said to the fools he had met here and there, and of the thousand things he could do if he only had a chance; and the simple hearted woman thought it was a great pity that those who were willing to do so much for themselves and the world should have so little opportunity, and that wealth and fame,

and a thousand charitable projects, must be foregone when, but for this or that little condition, they might be realized.

To have such an auditor was pleasant to Joseph Arnold. Not every one to whom he told his high aims and ambitions, with sighing for the untoward accidents that crippled his faculties, was so credulous.

And this was not all a hypocritical pretense. Though he had no faith in his power to begin a great work now—this very hour, to-day, or next week—he certainly had large confidence in his capacity for doing something sometime, when one or two successful fools should get out of his way, and circumstances should give him but the slightest aid. In other respects too Mrs. Yancey's house, though so ill kept, and with every thing at loose ends, was a good place for him : he could luxuriate in the pantry, skim the cream from the milk basins, purloin cold chicken, ham, and sauces, at pleasure ; and in such boyish habits, amid his great plans, he very frequently indulged, making sad inroads in Nanny's calculations for supper ; and it was a terrible annoyance to Eunice also, who thought him worse than the "red men," and "crushing his mind as with a nightmare."

But, in the most unfortunate instances, Mrs. Yancey laughed as if a pleasant thing had happened,

saying Nanny would have to provide something else, and if there were nothing, why William must go and buy what would do when he came home from work at night. It appeared, so the good woman said, that some persons who never performed any manual labor required more food than those who worked right hard. "It depends on the organization or something," said Mrs. Yancey.

In this last return Joseph Arnold found a fresh acquisition to his happiness in his young niece. Gentle and loving and dutiful, considerate for others, forgetful of self, no hardship was too wearying, and no sacrifice too great, by which she could do good to any one. In the garden, by the flower-beds, feeding the chickens, telling stories for the children, in the kitchen, or in the field with her father, she was busy, and cheerful and contented. Her indolent and improvident mother relied upon her judgment and skill, and so did the conceited Eunice, mourning the while her deficiency of mind.

To this little girl Arnold often talked—laying aside his many affectations, and seeming, for the time, the eccentric but not essentially weak or wrong-hearted person he really was: proud yet humble, self-sufficient yet helpless, careless of obtaining yet stingy of possession, slovenly in dress and rustic in manners yet despising the one and fostering the

other by unmanly and clownish behavior, and quick to recognize the high and noble yet in many respects still groveling and low.

To the sisters he presented his most formidable aspect—sometimes, startling their prejudices by cold and hard and antagonistic conclusions. He was fond also of surprising them by the easy familiarity with which he mentioned men and places they knew little about, and by pronouncing with fluency names of minerals, beasts and birds, with which they were not acquainted, as though he supposed himself speaking household words—all the while feeling in his own heart that he was appearing very far above them, and wonderfully well, withal. He made occasions to tell of the different amphibia of the tropics, as if he had passed years in the investigations of that particular subject—as if their hearts with one ventricle, and cold red blood, had been under his dissecting knife, and their precise powers of respiration had been ascertained by his successful experiments. The simple terms reptile and serpent he carefully avoided—*testudo*, *draco*, *lacerta*, *rana*, *amphisbæna*, and *cæcilia*, sounded so much wiser than frog, lizard, tortoise, &c. And while Mrs. Yancey leisurely and laughingly picked wool—the rain falling in her uncovered soap kettle beside the door meantime, and spoiling her soap—wondering at her brother's knowledge, and feeling what a pity

it was that chances were so against him; while Eunice deploring his habitual negligence of the mind, sat upright, communed with herself, or made shirts for the Indians; while Nanny prepared the dinner and milked the cows, and tended the baby; and William, active and energetic, planned and worked—Joseph Arnold indulged his appetite, in the pantry, his passion for hunting, wherever there were dogs and rabbits, and his ambition, in contradicting one sister or surprising the other. Surely no place could have been better suited for him, especially with his friend Wurth at hand, to supply his little necessities and acquiesce in all his plans and assertions; a stronghold and comfortable place of rest it was, and at present he troubled himself little that circumstances prevented the accomplishment of his great designs for the good of himself or the world.

One day as he came in from the fields, in all the pride of his sporting regalia, and—throwing in the lap of Nanny a string of birds, with outstretched wings and blood-speckled breasts—stretched himself lazily on the lounge, a quiet but knowing smile curled his lips, and evidently, from the manner of his combing with his fingers his full beard—a trick of his especial good humor—he felicitated himself upon something of more than usual interest and significance.

"Ask uncle Josey if that is all the game he killed?" said Mrs. Yancey, speaking to the baby, while she bent over it and gave it a sort of tickling shake.

"Tell mother," he replied, addressing the same factitious medium, "that uncle Josey brought down several small vertebrated quadrupeds, the which he didn't choose to bag."

"Is that what pleases you so much?" asked Eunice with a disdainful toss of her wise head.

"No," said Joseph, smiling as with a deeper enjoyment, and surveying his sister as though in some way she appeared ludicrous, while he bit the purplish leaves of a wild plant he held in his hand to keep back laughter, "no, that is not all, by any manner of means, my delectable sister."

Eunice folded her arms and walked straight out of the room, letting her Indian shirt drag over the face of her brother, who called after her to know if she were gone for self-communion, and added with a peculiar expressiveness of tone that he fancied that duty had been accomplished for the day.

"What are you eating, uncle Josey?" asked Mrs. Yancey, oblivious to the little passage between the brother and sister.

"Some sort of bane; I like the taste of it;" and the young man took another leaf in his mouth, as if the eating of poison were a small thing to him,

continuing, as he did so, "yes, Nanny, this is a deadly bane."

"I have heard say," said Mrs. Yancey, that whatever the king-snake touches turns to poison—do you believe it, Josey?"

"It seems very reasonable."

"I think likely our old horse, Tommy, got hold of some such thing, poor creature," said the amiable woman, and as she pitifully contemplated the case, Joseph arose and silently left the house, thinking, to himself, "What a silly woman my sister is!" and feeling, for the moment, that he could not breathe the same air with her.

But this does not explain his peculiar smile, nor why Eunice felt it to be an offense. Since the arrival of her brother, the views of the philosophical and progressive young lady seemed to have undergone some modification. She did not directly admit this in conversation, but her ostentatious displays of self-communion became less frequent; she talked less of the consecration of her life to the Indians; the idea was not yet abandoned, indeed, for she wrought daily at the shirts, though no longer close shut in her chamber, but in the family group. And once she even hinted, in conversation with Mr. Wurth, that it was barely possible, after all, that the heart was worthy of some little regard, as well as those purely intellectual faculties, to the

cultivation of which she had deemed it proper to devote so large a portion of her valuable time.

At length, perhaps without any accurately defined motive, she arranged the hair she had long combed away from her temples, for the sake of clearer perceptions, a little more after the usual mode, rolling a small puff on either cheek, and attaching it to the larger division with a side-comb.

It was the shrewd observance of this, and a fancied detection of the motive, which caused the offensive smile and good-humored accompaniment.

"Stranger things have happened," said Arnold, abruptly, as he returned from his solitary musing, and seated himself by his elder sister, who sat on the door-step, playing with the baby and two or three cats.

"Stranger things than what, Josey?"

"I don't know what I was thinking about," said the brother.

"Likely enough it was old Tommy and the king-snake," said the sister, as she laughingly hugged the baby in one arm, and a cat in the other.

"Oh, Nancy!" said the ever active husband, who had just come in, and was taking a long whip from the wall, "didn't you see that the pigs were in the garden?"

"No, William, I didn't," replied the wife. "I have been busy scolding a little bit at the children;

for, don't you think; they got to playing with the table, turning it up-side-down, and pretending it was a stage-coach, and some of them horses, and some passengers; and they hauled it about a little too roughly, I suppose, for they broke off two more of the legs, and I don't see how we are to eat with a table with one leg."

When the pigs were turned out of the garden, the tired husband harnessed his horses to the wagon and carried away the broken table to be mended, and on his return his wife informed him that while Nanny was milking, the tea-kettle boiled dry, and the spout melted off: but they could make tea in the dinner-pot.

And where was Miss Eunice? Communing with herself, cultivating her mind, or reflecting on some special consecration of her life, and what good was likely to accrue to the world from her noble efforts and example. She would have been ashamed to confess that she was really thinking of none of these things; but it must be admitted that her pretense to this effect was but a disguise for a more absorbing occupation of her thoughts.

She was in her chamber, as she was accustomed to be at this hour, but not sitting in "statue-like repose," upright, and with arms across her bosom. No, she was standing before a small glass, the face of which had previously been turned to the wall,

arranging and reàrranging her hair; and, when she succeeded in pleasing herself, it might have been noticed that the two little puffs were considerably enlarged, and worn lower on the face; that a white cape, with ruffles, was substituted for the plain kerchief previously worn; and that a plain gold ring—put aside in the period of her philosophic musing respecting the dignity of her sex and the objects of an ambition to which she should devote herself, as a worldly gewgaw—had assumed its old place on the first finger of her left hand.

When her toilet was completed she still hesitated, apparently in dread of descending. Once or twice she advanced to the stairs, and again retreated; then descended a step or two, and, retiring, sat by the window till—the tea having been boiled in the dinner-pot—Nancy came up to call her.

"Nanny, how do I look?" she asked, in a tone unusually sweet, for she seldom addressed the child at all: she could not endure contiguity with one so "totally deficient of intellectual cultivation."

"Oh! aunt Euny," she answered, in happy surprise, "I never saw you look half so pretty." And, to her utter astonishment, the cold, uncompromising aunt, stooped and softly kissed her.

CHAPTER XII.

Fate links strange contrasts.

*They lived together as most people do,
Suffering each others foibles by accord,
And not exactly either one or two.* BYRON.

*Is it not better to die willingly,
Than linger till the glass be all outrun?*
SPENSER.

THE fall, that sad season, when the reaping is all done, and the husbandman sits by the fire, while the long, dreary rains beat down the last flowers, and the housewife gathers, from long shut drawers and presses, the last year's clothes of the children, brushing off cobwebs, and patching and mending—that lonesome season came, and went. The revolutions in costume which take place in the country with the changes of the seasons, are much more distinctly marked than in cities; because there, as the Scotch have it, the “auld clathes” are made to look “amaist as well as new,” until the winter stores of woollens come from the factory, and the approach of the holidays justifies the donning of new suits.

How awkwardly and almost funnily they look—boys and girls—as they appear in those shears-and-needle-renewed garments, too narrow and too short: boys in coats that have fallen behind the fashion, with new patches at elbows, and shrinking from the wrist as though afraid of it, while buttons and buttonholes will not acknowledge the slightest affinity; and vests draw themselves up in disdain from trowsers, that, in turn, leave the ankle unprotected, and looking slim and shivering, like the leg of a pullet below the feathers. Half ashamed they feel when first required to go into the village, for tea and sugar, in spite of the dear kind mother's assurance that they look very well, and her promise that they shall soon have new suits, though they must make the old ones serve as long as they can. The last admonition is not always heeded, and the rents widen faster and the patches give way sooner than seems necessary. And the girls look odd enough, too, with the bright streaks around their skirts, where the last year's fucks were; some of the dresses—for they are woolen—shrunk till they are thick and stiff enough to stand alone, and yet too long and large for the younger sisters, to whom they are appropriated in succession. To be sure, they can *pretend* such gowns are the new fashion when they play with longnecked pumpkins in the barn, where the veriest old hen serves for a

waiting-maid, and the tall young calf, stepping feebly and awkwardly, becomes, in "the rapture of a vision," my lady's pet antelope.

This season of falling leaves and changing garments was long past, and the great log-fires had blazed in the deep chimneys, and gone down, for winter, too, was over. The drifting snows, that made such chilly beds for the young lambs, had melted in the thawing rains of spring, and the blustering winds, that angrily shook the great black forests as easily as they would have shaken the little beds of reeds, had subsided to laughing murmurs. The long evenings, bright with hearth-light, and merry with the sports of children, had shortened into brief twilights, beautiful with red clouds, and soft with balmy airs.

And spring now was ripening into summer. The windows were open, the knitting-work laid aside for the distaff; the colt was put in harness; and the fragrant earth turned up before the plow; while from the open barn-door flew a golden shower of chaff, where the threshing flail was heard beating and beating all the day long. The birds had mended their old nests, and silently and patiently awaited for the young life and the new song. The gardens were planted, and tender beets, and thick-leaved cucumbers, gave thrifty promise; and the orchard grounds were sown thick with

blossoms, which the enlarging fruit had pushed aside.

And Joseph Arnold and his friend still lingered and loitered with the Yanceys; but Joseph had grown more melancholy, and was more often than ever before seen alone. He had concluded that there was less chance for a man of sense to get along in this world than he had once with a fond self-flattery believed.

Frederick Wurth, on the contrary, had become even more easy and good natured; but though still generally replying "I think not," if Joseph said so, there was one point he would not yield: "single blessedness" was not the compassing of all human felicity, and, strange to say, in this opinion he had a strong ally in Miss Eunice, and she was actually about to renounce her immature vows, and consecrate anew her life on the altar of matrimony.

The little puffs, which had at first been worn with tremulous misgiving, were, in process of time, lengthened into curls; and afterward these were divided, and subdivided, till a profusion of graceful ringlets had more than once been shaken in the face of some tender appeal with a coquettish "nay."

Miss Eunice was now, indeed, assured beyond a possibility of doubt that she was come into the full light. Beyond the sphere of her vision, there was nothing to be discovered. The mind and heart

were all that were worth living for in this poor world. This was the third or fourth time she had been equally confident of the correctness and comprehensiveness of her opinions and ambitions; and, though the new plan was always in direct opposition to the old, she affirmed with each change, and heartily believed, that any further alteration or modification was quite outside of reason, or any possibility.

Mr. Wurth was by several years the junior of the elect lady, who, in her decided habits of thought, and uncultivated manners, was altogether different from him, while in every personal attraction he seemed to have as much superiority as in acquaintance with the world.

There are some men, and Mr. Frederick Wurth was one of them, who seem to marry on the principle by which they would procure a new coat or hat. The acquisition is indispensable, and who ever chances to be in the way at the propitious season is taken, for better or for worse.

Mr. Frederick Wurth was never hard to please. He shaped his thought in all things, and when it required but little exertion, the habits of his life, to a concurrence with the wishes of those about him. His first wife had been all grace and gentleness, but wooed less for these qualities than because accident had thrown him into her society; and

now—his faculty of adaptation as he called it, but really his want of such energy as is necessary for the preservation of any individuality, having made him familiar and at ease among the Yanceys—he would have seen in the best trained and most accomplished belle of the gay world to which he was born, no attractions higher than those of which the spinster Eunice boasted. If the whim to marry had seized him while wandering with Joseph Arnold beyond the Rocky Mountains, some tawny daughter of the forest would perhaps as readily have been chosen for his bride.

Mrs. Yancey grew more laughter-loving every day, and more confident in hope that some good luck would happen to her and William; she had often heard of people having money sent them, or something, just when they were in the greatest need. And so, in the blind credulity that takes no thought of ways and means, she prepared for the wedding, making larger expenditures than the hard and scanty earnings of her husband would justify.

Once the little man ventured to hint the propriety of some economy, when she requested him to buy half a dozen cans of oysters, and as many turkeys, and loaves of wedding-cake, with jars of preserves, and other confections, adding that she must also have five or six women to help her for a fortnight. "I thought," said the little man, "you made fifty

pounds of sugar into preserves last fall;" and he looked puzzled, and spoke deprecatingly.

The home-made preserves had fomented, and been fed to the pigs.

But it was not every day they had a wedding, and they must do a little like other folks. "Maybe you will find some money, William, when you are on the way to town;" and she concluded by relating that once, when she wanted to go to a big muster, she couldn't get a new dress, and just when she had given up, Uncle Benjamin happened to send her a new red calico pattern for one from down the river.

So the trustful woman carried the point, and the obedient husband arrayed himself in his Sunday-trowsers and hat, (he wore no coat in the summer), with one of the unbleached cotton shirts originally designed for the Indians, and set out to procure the aforementioned cakes, sweet-meats and other things needful at a wedding; having first, with the assistance of Mr. Frederick Wurth, who democratically volunteered his assistance, added a fresh supply of tar to the axles.

Mrs. Yancey purchased for herself, to be worn on the happy occasion, a new silk dress, and a lace cap, tastefully ornamented with flowers; and, for the sake of her husband's gentility she spread in the yard one of the lot of cotton shirts, to bleach,

which, owing to the reconsecration, had fallen to him. The preparations went forward vigorously. One or two women of the neighborhood spared their oldest girls to assist, and occasionally she herself superintended, waddling, from kitchen to cellar, with upturned sleeves, and an apron made of a small table-cloth.

The beating of eggs, and mixing, and rolling, and cutting, and baking, must be left to the reader's fancy, and also the nice washing of nice things, and starching, and drying, and, last of all, the table-setting and toilet-making—connected with which last duty poor Mr. Yancey suffered a disappointment.

The shirt which the kind-hearted wife intended to have bleached and "done up," had been quite forgotten, and when it should have been ready, in shining whiteness, it was still spread, bleaching, in the yard, the grass grown round it so that it was half concealed from observation. For a moment, it must be confessed, the good man, who was not entirely destitute of suitable pride for grand occasions, felt half vexed; but when his wife said it reminded her of their own happy wedding, he put his arm up about her neck and kissed her—saying one of the unbleached shirts would do just as well.

And little Nanny, where was she while the fire

blazed, and the blustery snows drifted against the door, and when the garden was planted, and the spring bloomed and ripened into summer? Slight and delicate always, she had been growing more and more fragile, all this while—quietly attending to household duties as long as she could. Then they began to give her the rocking-chair, and to tell her if she would not work so hard she would be better. Her father came home earlier of nights to milk the spotted cow, that liked no one to milk her so well as Nanny—who said every day she was better, and would soon be able to do as much as she used. While the winter lasted she was sure she should be well in the spring, and when spring came, and, instead of sitting in the rocking-chair, she lay all day in bed, she said, if it were not for that ugly cough, she would soon be well.

One day her father brought some roots and herbs, and made a sort of bitter tea, which Nanny did not like, though she drank it every day, still saying it made her stronger, till she could not lift her head from the pillow to take it any more. The village doctor was next called, and for weeks the poor child patiently and almost cheerfully took his medicines, that seemed more frightful than the disease; and still, though she said not any longer she was better, she continued to smile sweetly, and did not complain. And so, as the faint summer

came along the meadows and orchards, the dark shadow imprinted itself in the fair groundwork of her life.

The father ceased to speak of her getting well, yet he forebore to mention the grave, or the bright infinity beyond—as if being silent would push the reality aside. But still the mother talked hopefully, saying in a cheerful tone, as she brought the drink or the medicine, “When you get well, Nanny.” And the new summer dress and bonnet were bought, as though she were in health, and as if such shows would make her so.

In the old fashioned parlor the lights burned brightly; the little group of rustic friends were in holiday attire; but Nanny was not there. In a dimly lighted chamber she too was arrayed, in the new dress, which, by her own choice, was of pure white.

Joseph Arnold had been her faithful and constant watcher, and to-night he kept his place, looking very melancholy, but neither speaking nor moving. How distinctly sounded the ticking of the clock in the adjoining room.

Suddenly a cloud passed over the moon, and the soft light, that had fallen over the sick girl’s pillow, was gone.

“I am cold, very cold,” she said, faintly.

The young man arose, and laid his hand on her

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forehead. The prince ~~embraced~~ ^{embraced} her, and
softly kissing her ~~cheek~~ ^{forehead} he said, "I
hope you will never see me again."

CHAPTER XIII.

It rains—What lady loves a rainy day!

LONGFELLOW.

One other claimant for human paternity
Swelling the tide that flows on to eternity.

HOOD.

The poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
For young ones in her nest, against the owl.

SHAKESPEARE.

LOVE, nor marriage, nor death, nor funeral, nor anything else, may stay the wings of time; and the season of bitterest sorrow, and the time of gladdest rejoicing, are soon away in the by-gone. The days blush open, and fade dimly down, and the weeks come and go, and, smiling or weeping, we go out to our harvesting of roses, or of thorns. We give our children in marriage, and bury our dead, and all the while our hairs are whitening, and the furrows are deepening on our brows, till, at morning or midnight, we meet the last enemy, and, after a little feeble controversy, are heard of no more.

For a year the grass had grown over the grave

of Nanny, and the mother's tears fell less often on the bright green mound than they did on the fresh heaped earth.

By the unlettered headstone Joseph Arnold had planted a willow, drooping ever, and weeping with the dews and the rains; and here he might be seen more often than any who knew her, and, however solemn his musings were, he did not speak them, but smiled when his sister asked where he had been, and replied, with his old affectation, that he had been to the graveyard to get up his spirits.

"Say to uncle Josey he tells a great story," Mrs. Yancey would reply, speaking to the baby; for whomever she addressed in a negative way, she was most apt to ask the baby to assume the responsibility.

Yet by whatever prompted, the first and the last visits of the young man, on going from or returning to the house of his brother-in-law, were to the graveyard in which reposed his young niece.

As for Mr. Yancey, he had grown thinner in the last year, but he worked on, cheerful and energetic and hopeful as ever. The Indian shirts were not yet worn out, but the Sunday coat was more threadbare, and the hat had a few more indentations than were visible when Eunice was married.

When the children broke the teapot of the new set of china, Mrs. Yancey made coffee for a month,

till William could take her to town and supply the deficiency; and when Joseph told her to get a duplicate, she told the baby to tell him she wouldn't do any such thing, for she meant to get another just like the old one, if she could. To assist about the house a small negro girl had been obtained, but she could ill supply the place of Nanny. The young Griselda had possessed something of her father's nature, and they twain, within doors and without, kept all in order; but now there was no head of the family, it seemed, and all things were awry, except the happy tempers of Nancy Yancey and her little husband. The world went wrong, but they never seemed to know it, or were quite sure it would go right to-morrow; and age was in the distance, not so far but that his shadow fell upon their faces, yet they saw only youth, and fortunate accidents, and never-ending pleasures, of such sorts as to one or the other would give most delight. Dear Mrs. Yancey would occupy the great armed rocking-chair in years that bounded her ideas of the farthest future, and the husband would hold the plow for ever in his undecaying fields, which sometime, he was sure, would yield a harvest greater than should be needed for the season's necessities.

And what changes have a year wrought with Miss Eunice, or, as we must hereafter say, Mrs.

Wurth? When she appears in the fashionable assembly does she wear the same narrow black silk dress, and big Leghorn bonnet—resembling, as much as anything, an old-fashioned churn set on the top of a round table—by which she was always recognized in the little stone meeting-house? The world, the world! its hold is very strong upon us all, theorize as we may, and the rich matron retained as little of the country maiden as might be. There were traces of identity, indeed, but this was no fault of hers; powder and patches, laces and lawns, did away with them as far as was possible by art. The heavy mantle and costly bonnet were worn with little grace; a fine style ill became her; and under her novel supervision the quiet elegance which pervaded the house of the first Mrs. Wurth was broken up, and a showy and glaring discord substituted.

Some very choice pictures—historical and landscape pieces—were taken down and consigned to the “spare-room,” with the wardrobe of the departed and forgotten, and two portraits hung in their places—herself and husband, of course—she in a dress of crimson, fondling a lap-dog.

“My gracious! dear sakes!” exclaimed the nurse, dancing and curtesying about before it, (she never walked, or stood still, but ran or skipped when she attempted the one, and her nearest approach to

the other was a graceful vibration from foot to foot). "Dear sakes! Goodell, I shall go blind."

"Why, Miss Crum! But I hear your baby calling from the nursery."

"I can tell you, Goodell, *that* is not our Mrs. Wurth," said Miss Crum, looking over her shoulder, toward the flashy canvas, as she left the parlors with her old associate in the family service.

The even good nature and real kindness of the housekeeper had in process of time won upon the tart disposition of the nurse, who had made a compromise of dignity, and in place of saying "Mrs. Goodell," or "Margaret," said now with easy familiarity and condescension, Goodell. And so, as their occupations kept them much apart, they proceeded nicely till the reign of the second Mrs. Wurth began; and this new sway, at the period to which I wish to bring my reader, had been exercised for a year.

One of those long soaking rains that fall and fall when the earth is already perfectly drenched and saturated, and when a thousand eyes are looking impatiently for the sun, had been steadily coming down for days, and the clouds looked heavier and darker still than the first day they rose above the city. Omnibuses, crowded down to the steps, men with closely buttoned coats, and faces hidden beneath umbrellas, hurrying up and down, and

women, in their worst bonnets and dresses, holding aside their skirts and stepping carefully, and now and then a closely-shut coach, were all that could be seen.

Nor were the sounds such as enliven : the pattering of the rain against the windows, the low, dull thunder, which was scarcely known to be such, and the quick ringing of the bell by some impatient person at the door, or haply the rattling of the wheels as some carriage was driven with unusual speed, were all that claimed attention or broke the oppressing silence which reigned in the dreary houses.

A little lurid light glimmered about the sunset, and the rain ceased long enough to induce some hope, but with nightfall it came on again, in that dull, steady way, which gives no indication of an ending.

It was almost summer, but a fire burned in the grate (for moisture was gathered in drops on the walls), where, at the feet of her nurse, a child was playing, now with a ball and now with a book, which she affected to read. She was beautiful, and looking very happy, for her heart held no sad memory, even though Miss Crum had often shown how and where she held her to see the funeral train of her mother, long ago. That excellent person still occupied her old position, in spite of frequent

disagreements, which would ere now have ended in open quarrel and separation, but for circumstances that were understood by the parties most interested.

She tripped lightly from place to place, dusting and brushing, and arranging, and reàrranging, though all things were in the most perfect order. The rain seemed not to have affected her spirits, and she even began to sing "Lely loly ly, lyly loly le," to a tune of her own improvisation, as she examined the drawers of the bureau—unfolding and folding various articles, and making many separate parcels.

"Oh, mercy!" she suddenly exclaimed, in the midst of her song, and violently shut the drawer and seized the hand of little Catharine who, unobserved, had stolen near, attracted by the song or by curiosity.

"What has the child done?" asked Mrs. Wurth, who never used more words than were necessary, and never said Catharine, but always "Child."

"Oh! don't you think," replied the nurse, as though a fearful calamity had been threatened, "she had like to have seen"—here she hesitated a moment, and added, "what I was doing!"

"How absurd, Araminta! the child—not three years old!" And Mrs. Wurth renewed her occupation of looking into the fire.

The nurse heeded not the scornful manner of the lady, nor her contemptuous words, but, taking up the little girl, began singing "Catharine, Catharine, Catharine," over and over, as if with a view of soothing her to sleep.

"Who gave her that name?" asked the step-dame, who well knew it was borne by her mother, and was kept from making use of it by a jealous and unholy feeling.

"What name?" said the nurse, still repeating it in her song.

"The name she bears—what else should I mean?"

"Who named her Catharine?"—here Miss Crum kissed her charge—"it was her mother's name, you know. She was the sweetest and most beautiful woman in the world. And so young! she was not twenty-one when she died. She was so refined, and elegant! and all folks that knew her said she was perfectly lovely."

The nurse embraced every opportunity of lauding the late Mrs. Wurth—her grace and wit, her gentleness, and personal charms—whenever with Mrs. Eunice, as she said to Goodell, "merely to irritate her." It was her delight to caress the child in the presence of the reigning mistress, and to point out, with ingenious phrases, fitted to annoy that once philosophical specimen of her sex, all

those resemblances in the one that were suggestive of contrasts in the other, or that could induce most mortification in her heart, or keenest regret in the heart of her husband. There are many women who are suspected of very little cleverness until they have fit occasions for displays of malice, when they evince a genius as brilliant and fearful as it is unexpected. Our Araminta, though she had "never been able to see in any man such qualities as she could endure in a husband," could yet see a great way into those mill-stones called hearts, and she was rarely so happy as when bringing fire from their flinty centers.

"Mrs. Wurth," it was her wont to say, as though there were no other Mrs. Wurth, "had such exquisite taste in dress, and everything else! I hope little Catharine will be just like her."

All this was excessively annoying to the step-mother, and jealousy of the dead Catharine grew into dislike of her child, amounting, if not to hatred, to a hateful repugnance; and something of the feeling was extended to the nurse, whom she called "Araminta," or "nurse," with all the emphasis which, for the same purpose, she used in addressing the housekeeper, to intimate her superior position, by her name of "Mrs. Goodell."

Persons who have to serve, have often a peculiar sensitiveness respecting the social elevation of their

employers, and are especially jealous of any vulgar pretension. The dignified and elegant Miss Araminta Crum, who "might in her day have married almost any body in the city," was severely tried in being compelled by her "affection for the dear little Catharine" to an obedience to the caprices and whims of "such an upstart as Mrs. Eunice," and to-night she could not resist the temptation of strengthening her false impression in reference to the child's name, by these allusions to the mother. Who would be so likely as the father to call the child Catharine? The reasonable inference, however, was not the fact, as, soon after the death of his wife, Frederick Wurth left home for a year's adventure and pleasure, having scarcely seen his daughter, and perhaps never having thought of such a matter as the selection of her name.

The good Mrs. Goodell, whose love for her late mistress was sincere, had named the baby, and also carefully preserved the black silk dress and silver spoons up to this period.

"Take that child to bed," said the step-mother, after enduring the nurse's song half an hour.

"I don't want to go," the victim answered, her eyes wide open; and Miss Crum continued her song for a moment, as though she had not heard the direction; then, slowly rising, she presented Catharine for a kiss, to her "mama," who, ashamed

to refuse, touched her lips to the child's forehead, without speaking to her, or looking at her.

And the nurse, telling her she must be a little lady, and sleep with Goodell to-night, embraced her as if that parting were the most painful incident in all her history.

In the morning the house seemed in strange confusion. The servants were in high glee, and the breakfast evinced such liberality, in variety and abundance, as justified suspicions that all things in the establishment were to be on a new scale of munificence, while the general satisfaction, which none seemed able to conceal, was not less suggestive of some happy fortune. Miss Crum presided with a pleased smile, while Mr. Frederick Wurth really laughed out, saying, "The muffins are so very funny this morning."

"Why don't mama come?" asked the child, and Miss Crum informed her little girls must not ask questions.

After a while, however, she was told, to her great discontent and bewilderment, that she had a little sister up stairs, whom some good old lady had brought from far away to be her companion and the sharer of her playing.

When Mrs. Wurth appeared at breakfast again, poor Miss Crum was informed that her services were no longer required; and that estimable woman

said she was as glad to go as any one could be to have her : she was only grieved to leave the darling Catharine in the hands of such a low creature ; at which scarcely civil speech Mrs. Goodell held up both hands and exclaimed " Why, Miss Crum ! "

CHAPTER XIV.

THE weariest pangs the wretched find
Are rapture, to the dreary void,
The leafless desert of the mind,
The waste of feelings unemployed.

BYRON.

Mine after life—What is mine after life!
My day is closed! the gloom of night is come,
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate!

JOANNA BAILIE.

THE advertisement for a faithful and efficient nurse, to take charge of a child three years old, was speedily answered. It mattered little, indeed, to Mrs. Wurth, whether a nurse were faithful and efficient or not—so much did she dislike Catharine, and so entirely was she engrossed with the little stranger, as Mrs. Goodell called the baby—so that the first applicant was almost sure of securing the place.

It was the morning of the day after Miss Crum's departure when Mrs. Wurth was informed that a young woman had called to offer her services.

"Tell her to come up," she said. "Waiting

women are so insolent! but the poor creatures have not mind to comprehend the duties of their stations."

"This is the person I spoke of," said Margaret, as Mrs. Goodell was again called, and turning toward the candidate for her mistress's approval, who lingered by the door, she added, "This is Mrs. Wurth," and then withdrew.

The lady surveyed her for a moment, in silence, and pointing to a seat in a distant part of the room, proceeded with her examination.

"Did you know Mrs. Catharine Wurth?"

"No, madam," replied the girl, in a low and melancholy tone, surveying meanwhile the elegant furniture of the chamber with the air of one who saw such displays for the first time, but who felt neither admiration nor surprise.

"Are you fond of children?" was the next question, asked in a sharp and dissatisfied tone which brought the large sad looking eyes of the abstracted young woman into contact with her own cold gray ones.

"Yes—no—I was never much used to children;" and she tightened her arms about a small wooden box she held in her lap, which was, perhaps, a foot in length, and four or five inches thick.

"If you are too fond, you will spoil the child; that is all."

"That will not be likely; I do not talk much;" and she reached out her hand and with an air of unconsciousness muffled the lace which edged a little robe hanging near her, sighing as she did so.

"Are you sick? there is no color in your face;" and Mrs. Wurth began to look at her more curiously.

"No," said the girl, "I am not sick; my bodily health is very good."

"And of course you have no mind."

"Not much," she said, writing on the box with her finger.

"Good health—don't talk—not fond of children: I think of nothing more I care to ask;" and the mistress rang the housekeeper's bell. Margaret appeared presently, and was directed to show the young woman into the nursery and explain to her the duties she would be expected to perform.

"Shall I carry your box?" asked the kind Mrs. Goodell.

The offer was declined, and, pausing at the door, she turned and said "You have arranged about the terms, I suppose?"

"No, I thought nothing about it."

"Why, Mrs. Wurth!"

But when the lady explained that it was not for persons in her position to parley about dollars and

cents, the housekeeper bowed, the girl smiled, and they withdrew together.

Arrived in the nursery, the young woman surveyed it with the same indifferent curiosity with which she had noted the chamber of the mistress. "And this is where I am to sleep?" she remarked, approaching the bed; and on being answered in the affirmative, she lifted the pillow, and deposited her box beneath it.

"What a beautiful child!" she said, for the first time betraying some interest and animation, and, stooping, she kissed her cheek, still wet with tears the little Catharine had shed, having been sent from her mama's room in punishment for saying she loved Miss Crum; and, as she lay asleep in careless gracefulness, the black curls along her white forehead, her dimpled hands together, and her face like a rosebud in the dew, she might well call forth the exclamation of "Beautiful child!"

"Indeed she is, young woman! and as sweet-tempered as she is pretty. You are a young woman, I see," added Margaret, "and I don't know what else to call you."

"I am twenty, nearly," said the girl, "and you may call me Hagar."

"Hagar!" repeated the housekeeper, whose ideas of courtesy were not very nice, "you do look as if

you might have been in the wilderness and found no water—so pale and melancholy like.”

“I have,” she replied, removing her simple straw bonnet, and smoothing back her dark and heavy tresses, as though to divert some paining thought.

“And how much wages do you expect—you don’t look able to do much;” said Margaret, who was one of those persons constitutionally economical, and as ready to exert her ability in another’s behalf as in her own.

“I am able to do all that will be required, but I shall be satisfied with whatever they choose to give me.”

“Why, dear me!” exclaimed Margaret, alarmed, in turn for the interest of the girl, and anxious for justice on both sides: “that will never do, my child; you must make up your mind to ask what is right, and Frederick Wurth is not the man to be mean.”

“I do not care,” Hagar said; “anything you think is right will satisfy me, if it be enough to pay for the few things I shall need. Arrange it for me, if you please.”

This Margaret readily promised to do, and she then proceeded to an explanation of the various and not very difficult duties of the nurse, who was also to be in some sense a governess for the little girl; and these instructions finished, she led her

into the "spare room," where the memorable trunks were opened, and directions were given for airing the dress, brightening the silver, &c., as often at least as once a month.

Hagar was an attentive though she seemed a scarcely conscious listener, and she readily acquiesced in every suggestion, and promised to fulfil as nearly as possible every obligation thus imposed on her.

And days and weeks followed, and with a quiet step, a pale unsmiling face, and a voice monotonous and low, but always gentle, she moved about, executing with scrupulous exactness every task assigned her. She rarely spoke, unless there was some necessity that she should do so, nor did she manifest an interest in anything she heard or saw. At times, indeed, when the door of her room was suddenly opened, she was observed to sit with the little wooden box in her lap, or hastily to put it away, and once or twice with signs of an emotion she could not quite conceal; but there was no other spell that could disturb the apparent slumber of her heart, or change the placid and patient expression of her countenance.

The little Catharine seemed to win more and more her affection, but she rarely displayed in words or actions any fondness for the child, who was, however, quick to understand, as all children

are, the thousand nameless attentions through which love finds its way from the heart, and more than returned all that was given her by the silent nurse.

And Mrs. Eunice was quite content with the change thus effected in her establishment; she was seldom annoyed with the presence of the little girl, or that of the successor of Miss Crum. She cared little what became of her step-daughter, if she were but kept from her sight. Hagar, she said, was a dull mope, with very little mind, and that of a quality to be moulded to her own will, should she ever condescend to take any trouble about it; and she was very fit and quite good enough for the child.

But Hagar did not regard the supercilious and even contemptuous haughtiness of her mistress; she lived in her own world, in her own heart; and there had histories, and ruins, and shining mountains away in the past, more beautifully bright for the wastes about the present; and cloud and darkness in the future, scarcely pierced by any smouldering fire of hope, faintly glowing amid the ashes of nearly forgotten dreams.

The little girl grew strangely shy. Sometimes she would timidly open the door of Mrs. Wurth's room, but no kind word nor smile of encouragement greeted her, and after a little wistful lingering she would generally go away, wondering why

her mama never kissed her, as she did her little sister.

"To be sure, the child is selfish and ill-tempered," said the lady to her friends, "but I always do by her just as if she were my own."

The philosophical lady was never conscious of any sins of omission. If, with however much reluctance and difficulty, she forced herself to the performance of any common duty—if, in view of possible consequences, she abstained from an ebullition of angry feeling—she gave herself infinite credit for heroical virtue; and she had never a doubt that the easy processes with which she convinced herself of the possession of much superfluous goodness—of what some of the holy fathers might have called a comfortable store of works of supererogation—would be accepted in that unknown world, where there undoubtedly existed an intense longing for the presence of that daughter of Eve who had made up a piece and a half of unbleached muslin into shirts for Winnebagoes and Camanches. She had an especial mental satisfaction in regarding the manner with which she discharged the office of a step-mother to little Kate. If she withheld a blow from the fragile and beautiful creature, she counted it as of the merit of a kiss bestowed; and in fair truth this was not among the most erroneous of her judgments: for, as the litanies

have it, from such kisses as she was apt to bestow on the poor step-child, we might say, Father of mercies, grant us deliverance !

When she said good-night to him, her father turned his cheek to be kissed, because it had been his own custom when young, and not that it gave him any pleasure, or any thought. And at such times Mrs. Eunice, too, touched her cold, unimpassioned lips on her forehead, but without a word, and with the manner of one performing a necessary but unpleasant task.

If the fire was aglow on the hearth, and the circle narrow around it, she made no widening for the child, if she chanced to come in; nor would she answer the timid look which asked if she were welcome. Of course, she was not expected to remain; there was no place for her; the verdict was understood as well as if it were spoken, and the step-daughter felt it as keenly, and was obedient to it—lingering a moment, and withdrawing silently as she came.

"You make everything pretty for little sister," she sometimes said, "and nothing for me. Won't you make something for me?"

But Hagar, she was told, would do as well. So, as she grew, she became lonely, and more and more reserved—her heart heavy with its own love,—for all the tenderness of her nature was repulsed,

and, like a stream forced into its fountain, struggled for escape somewhere.

One evening Hagar found her sitting on the floor, and playing with old letters. The child ran toward her as she entered, and putting the papers in her lap, asked her to read. She obeyed, mechanically, and the first dingy bit of paper unfolded was a receipt for the coffin of the dead mother; and the next a brief note from a clergyman, in answer to a request referring to her funeral sermon, and signed "N. WARBURTON." Tears, the first she had shed in a long time, came to her eyes, and, taking the child on her knees, she rocked her to sleep, to the slow and heavy beating of her heart.

Then she laid her softly in bed, kissed her, wrapped the covering about her, and, standing a little way off, seemed to contemplate her beauty and untroubled slumber with a still and unutterable sorrow.

While she was thus engaged, the housekeeper, who often came up to see the nurse, opened the door, and, approaching the bed, inquired if Catharine were sick.

"No—she is quite well, I believe."

"Why, then, do you look so sad, and watch as if she were dying?"

"I cannot tell: but her beauty, and innocence,

and this sweet calmness of her rest, made me melancholy."

"What a strange young woman you are! a pretty, healthy little girl like that, lying fast asleep, make you look as though you had no friend!—really, I fear you have not your right reason."

"True, she is very lovely, and gently asleep, and I am faded, and worn, and weary: I cannot sleep as she does. And if I look as if I had no friend, I only look as I am."

"Why, Hagar! it is only to-day that little Catharine told me she loved you better than anybody in the world, and then she climbed to the table, where I was molding cakes, and said she loved me too. And it made me happy that she did so, and I made a little cake for her, and she was happy too."

The good woman smiled as she spoke, and her plain sunburnt features were transformed almost into beauty, with the kind and amiable feeling that was in her heart.

"But if she does love me," said Hagar, "she will grow away from me as she becomes older and contrasts me with the gay and fortunate people who will be about her."

"It will be natural, when she is grown, if she loves another better than you, indeed, and I am sure I hope she will," the housekeeper gaily answered, as a pleasant fancy flashed across her brain.

"How did you learn to be so happy? I should like to study your secret."

"I never learned at all. I have no time to search after happiness, and, therefore, I suppose it comes to me. But I am a little tired, to-night—enough to make me ready to sleep, and so, good night; and I wish you may wake in the morning blithe as a lark. We have much to be grateful for."

"The cottager," Hagar said, "who stays contented on the side of the mountain, hears the birds sing all day; and the glory of the sunset and the sunrise makes him glad; but he who comes down into the valleys where there are palaces, is walled in at morning and evening, or closed about with clouds; or, ascending to their summits, he treads their shining snows alone."

"What do you say?" asked Margaret.

"Nothing," answered Hagar; and the two women parted for the night.

CHAPTER XV.

BUT ever and anon of grief subdued
There comes a token like a serpent's sting.

BYRON.

Thought
Precedes the will to think, and error lives
Ere reason can be born.

CONGREVE.

Some secret venom preys upon his heart,
A stubborn and unconquerable flame
Creeps in his veins and drinks the stream of life.

ROWE.

“DESPAIR, utter despair, is indeed passionless. The hands fall listlessly, and the eyes fasten on the ground ; darkness has no terror for us, nor the light a charm ; scarcely would we turn aside for the ashes blown against us from the pit, or pause for the golden shadows that fall from the bastions of the City of Peace. I tremble to think how a sudden tempest of passion may sweep over us, and, before reason has time to nerve herself for defense, prostrate and leave our poor humanity in ruins—ruins which only the life beyond the grave may build into beauty again—that life to which we are lifted on the white wings of prayer, far over the rushing waves of sorrow—far over the stagnant waters of a hopelessness of the mercy of Heaven.”

Hagar paused ; and, closing the volume from which she had been reading, seemed lost in

thought; and little Catharine, who sat silently listening, though she could not understand, arose, and twining her arms about the neck of the young nurse, kissed her cheek, quietly, unobtrusively, saying in a sweet and childish beseeching tone, "Dear Hagar, I want you to read more."

The sunlight brightly shimmered through the drapery of the window, and illumined the faces of the woman and child. The flowers, which grew in vases of porcelain, with only a handful of the brown moist earth, in which to take root, blossomed out, white and yellow and scarlet, leaning softly to the light. The child reached her hand toward the slant column of shining beams, but the woman sat motionless and pale in oppressive reflection, and not till the request was twice or thrice repeated did she notice it, when, opening the book at random, she read:

"The spider works and works, and the silvery tissue widens, thread after thread; but a dew drop falls too heavy, or a breath of wind blows too strong, and the frail fabric is gone; and so we add plan to plan, and involve thought with thought, building up theories and systems, whose foundations are unstable as the slim limbs and tremulous leaves beneath the spider's web. The rock is before us, but we pause on the sand. With a cloud of unbelief we sweep the stars out of heaven, and fearfully and vainly work on in the dark. Oh, Time! dim, and fading, and troubled! thy wings are too narrow to shelter the soul."

"Read on," the child said, fascinated perhaps by something sweet and touching in the girl's voice, at times almost tremulous, as if the fountain of her inmost nature were stirred.

"Since the angels darkened into demons, in the very lap of heaven, and, discrowning their brows of love, recrowned them with iron and thorns, the moaning through the universe will not be still. Sweat must dampen the wheat sheaves, and tears moisten the rose wreath, and the bridal hymn must bring up echoes from the grave. Shall we not enjoy the broken music that is left? shall we pine out of life for that we have not the food of angels? shall we bide the pitiless storm, when the home roof might shelter us? We have need of the strongest defense against the enemies that are in the world, busy all the time—Doubt, and Change, and Pain, and Death. If the sea-rocks are not enough for a strong wall, let the river-reeds be gathered—there may be rents which they will fill. Little children, with singing, may break them off, and our safety be made, if not perfect, at least very good and beautiful.

"We may put on a fair outside, and assume the gloss of truth, till we make ourselves never so fair; we may cry out Peace when peace is broken, and Courage when our bosoms shake with fear; with a lie we may deceive the world, winning hearts to us all along the journey of life; but we cannot deceive ourselves. And, after all, perhaps the bitterest of our punishment is, that the world thinks better of us than we are.

"There is no such pitiable wretch as the successful hypocrite. To an enemy that we have made, and deserve to have made, we may yet present an opposing front; but the friendly hand disarms us—we must smile, smothering conscience, fearing, too, that every glance is a cunning searchèr—every kindest word laden with suspicion of our hearts. We do not know, when we envy or execrate the bad, how artificial or

unreal their seeming prosperity may have been. We do not know how often they have sat in the tents of sorrow, nor how much of remorse and shame they have been compelled to carry in their bosoms."

And Hagar desultorily turned over the leaves of the book, until another passage arrested her attention.

"I have no words to paint her beauty: she was the fulfilled dream of my boyhood—young, and trusting, and innocent, and lovely: all I ever desired was in my arms—rather, all I would have desired, but for defying and damning pride. She was poor, and I was rich; she was humble, and I was of a high position. And she was gentle and pure—better, how infinitely better than I!—yet I cast her from me, and am alone. But the sea is not wide enough, nor the mountains high enough, to divide her from my visions. Her reproachful face comes between me and the sunshine. I take in my hands the golden lengths of her curls, and say, over and over, 'Love, I love you,' but she will not smile upon me any more.

"She is dead, and I am living—dead, and it was I who made her grave. To the home of her girlish innocence I dare not go. Once it was a picture of repose, girt about with beautiful flowers—now, I know not what—and a mother's abhorring arms press me back from ever seeing it hereafter."

And again she read:

"What am I? and what have I been? and what shall I be? These are the questions that torment me. I have been wicked, and have stripped myself for the scourge. I have been rebellious, and have prayed as one who had a right to be heard. I have climbed against the darkness, trusting in my own strength, till, faltering and unequal, I have fallen,

as the serpent from the curse. I have wept tears bitterer than wormwood, hiding my eyes from all God's beautiful world; and light, from the beams of the cross, has brightened my way; but my human life must be henceforth a wandering echo of the past, and all the future is hidden, perhaps in mercy, from my eyes."

Still the child sat listening, as if in perfect sympathy with every word, when the reading was interrupted by a tap at the door, which preceded the entrance of Mr. Frederick Wurth, who sometimes, failing of amusement, came to the nursery, rather to converse with Hagar than to see his child. He was smiling good-naturedly, as was his wont, and holding in his hand an open letter. -

"What are you reading—a new romance?"

Without speaking, Hagar turned the lettering of the volume toward him.

"A famous author that man is becoming; he would not have earned such a reputation in the profession—he deserted, though he had talents for anything. Jo Arnold said once to me he was the most eloquent preacher he ever heard, and I said the same thing to Jo."

"Who is Jo Arnold?"

But without replying, Mr. Wurth took the volume out of her hand and read the title page, saying, "I wanted to see if he still retained the 'reverend,' but I see he simply writes his name, Nathan Warburton."

Hagar said nothing, and he continued, "What an excitement there was when he left his church here and the ministry, for foreign travel!"

"Not so much excitement as reluctance to part with him, was there?"

"No, you are right—reluctance to part with him; but some thought he was out of his mind."

"I never thought him so; he seemed to me oppressed with some private grief, some bereavement, perhaps."

"Yes, some private grief or bereavement: no doubt of it. But how does he write?"

"There are passages in the book which seem to me very characteristic, but I should say the author was a wretched man, who scarcely knew his own purposes."

Mr. Wurth took the book from her hand, and glancing over it a moment, said, "Yes, just so—a wretched man that scarcely knows what he is aiming to do."

"He has been traveling a great while—I wonder if he will ever come home—he would scarcely become a voluntary exile for life? No, he will hardly become an exile for life!"

There was a long pause; little Catharine had climbed on the knee of her father, and was fallen asleep; he smoothed her black curls with his hand, and as if for the first time aware of their depth of

tone, contrasted them with the tresses of Hagar, which, though called black, seemed almost brown in comparison.

"Really," he said with a look of surprise, "I never knew before that you wore false hair—lose your's by sickness?"

"I have had occasion to wear this for several years."

"That is unfortunate. But Katy grows heavy," he continued, for his mind never dwelt long on any one thing—" 'a little heavy, but no less divine,' as my friend Jo Arnold would say."

"You spoke of him before: who is he?" Hagar asked, as she took the child and placed her on the bed, bending over her to hide the tears which would have betrayed how little interest she felt in the question.

Mr. Wurth explained, and added to the brief biography, that he would not have believed a man could so change, if he had not seen it with his own eyes. "It seems," he continued, "the metamorphosis was brought about, at least in part, by this very Mr. Warburton we have been talking about."

"Is it possible! And is the change for good or for evil?"

Mr. Wurth laughingly shook his head, saying, "Jo used to be a good, easy, devil-may-care sort of fellow, and now he is a zealous divine."

"Then the change is for the better."

"Yes, I should think it must be for the better; but here are two letters from him, with a year's difference in the dates," and he threw them into Hagar's lap, assuring her they would explain themselves.

It was one of the necessities of Mr. Wurth's nature to talk to somebody; and it made little difference to whom, for he never thought of losing caste. And in some way he had fallen into that singular hallucination, that what interested himself must necessarily interest everybody else; so, from time to time he brought for Hagar to read, private letters, written, it might be, by a maiden aunt, and of a knitting-work character; or by a gay cousin, who talked of pleasure and made witticisms; or by some one else, who could by no possibility have composed a sentence to interest a stranger, ignorant of his fears, friends, or foes. These missives Hagar read because accustomed to do whatever was required of her, never seeming to have any will of her own: but the two by Joseph Arnold seemed to claim her thought as well as her eyes. The first began—

"DEAR FRED—This is Sunday, and deuced hot and uncomfortable. I have been lying under a maple by the mill-stream—my line thrown out a little way below, and a new book in hand—one of those bewildering productions which are making so much noise—of course you understand: that

strange combination, the latest of Warburton's works. I have never forgotten that sermon—so full of eloquent warning to the sinner—so luminous with hope, comforting to the afflicted: the very words seemed leaning to the heart; and how well I remember his saying, 'Oh, she was good, and in her life and her death alike beautiful! knowing her goodness, shall it be to us a barren thing? shall we not also shape our lives into beauty? shall we not wash and be clean?' But a truce to sermonizing. My coat is threadbare, and my pockets empty, but as soon as opportunity occurs I mean to do something. When I left the house Nancy had her bonnet on to go to church, but the discovery of a hole in her stocking obliged her to wait, and as the children had used the darning yarn for a ball, and she had dropped her thimble in the well, I fear she must be disappointed. And William too—poor fellow! I left him waiting patiently, and looking much as if he had dressed himself forty years ago, and never undressed since.

"Yours,

J. A."

The next letter spoke of his entrance into the ministry—of how easy a thing it was to be pure in heart, and in all ways, obedient to the highest law.

CHAPTER XVI.

O hope, sweet flatterer! thy delusive touch
Sheds on afflicted minds the balm of comfort.

GLOVER.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear bodden gray, and a' that,
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.

BURNS.

Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife.

BYRON.

TIME, that great alchemist in whose alembic all things are changed—debased, or purified, or stript of glosses, shadows or deceits—has passed onward through some fifteen years. The excellent Mrs. Goodell is still the housekeeper of Mr. Frederick Wurth, whose good-natured face has grown red and round, while his locks have become gray and thin, and who remains in that listless and rosy indolence which knows no discontent with action or opinion, or with what to others are the most vexing caprices of the world. The housekeeper is old

now, but she has lost none of her pleasant cheerfulness, her tidiness, or activity, and on holidays she makes a noticeable figure about her dominion, in the ancient fashioned black silk dress which her young mistress, Catharine, gave her on her wedding day.

Mrs. Eunice became; years ago, the centre of a circle, in which theologies, philosophies, systems of economy and polity, and half the institutions built up by the race in a hundred generations, were demolished with as much ease as Athos, by that old conqueror who found the mountain in his way, was cast into the sea. Her mind had been cultivated until men were seen by her in all their natural grossness and deformity, and she made terrible resolves against the continuance of their tyrannous monopolies, in the council, and the field, and all varieties of out door affairs. She had been chairwoman of some scores of committees formed to demand of governors and presidents the liberation and pardon of the most depraved wretches sentenced to penitentiaries or to scaffolds; she was perfectly convinced that the "philosopher of Jerusalem" was far behind the editor of the Transcendent Transcendentalist, and that the Twelve whom he commissioned to teach his doctrine were less advanced than the standing committee of the Society of Unappreciated Women, of which she

herself was a vice president. Observing that the hens yielded undue deference to the roosters, every one of whom seemed to think himself really entitled to be a cock of the walk, she said it was no wonder, with the examples they had before them of men's hateful assumptions, and she organized a powerful society for the assertion, vindication and preservation of Biddies' Rights; but though it passed alarming sets of resolutions, the society's labors availed but little, so obstinate is mistaken nature, and so difficult is it to put down abuses that have been long quietly submitted to. Annoyed at the difficulties in the way of a reconstruction of society, but confident that the luminous theories she had propounded in her communications to *The Hour Glass* and *The Old Roman*, and in her speeches, in assemblies of the disenthralled, would bear rich fruit hereafter, she went abroad, to confer with the great lights of Progression in other countries, and died—in wet blankets, and hooped about with galvanic rings—of rage and wonder that she was met by no processions, and that Jane Eyre, to whom she had written a letter, knowing her to be happily married, had not sent a carriage to the landing to invite her to a conference of a few months on the best means of promoting the amelioration of the condition of the sex.

Miss Crum survives these additional fifteen years

without appearance of much decay. She never married the doctor, or any body else, but has a nice room of her own, in the house of a younger brother, furnished, she says, with all a heart can desire. The ingrain carpet is faded, and it is nicely darned; her five windsor chairs are painted red, and Mrs. Goodell thinks they look almost as good as mahogany; her rocker, which belonged to her great aunt, has a cushion covered with handsome chintz, and a tidy of white cotton, knit with her own hands; of what material her bureau was made it might be difficult to tell, but it shines as clearly as the most freshly polished rosewood; by her high and narrow bed, is a small cherry stand, on which the brightest of candlesticks is always in its place, and from it she sometimes takes a cup of tea, if she really thinks it will do her good; and a footstool, in the covering of which is wrought a white dog with black eyes and a red nose—with one or two other and unimportant articles—completes her household furniture. Her two little curls look much as they looked twenty years ago, and she has flounces yet for fit occasions. And she is still industrious—making, mending, keeping the house in order, and taking care of the children, whom she thinks she will make her heirs if they grow up to please her, and are likely to do well in the world. Her chief delight is in an ancient canary bird that

never sings. Its plumage is faded, and it picks the feathers from neck and wings till only its devoted mistress could tell whether it were bird or beast. Nevertheless, it seems to her a "thing of beauty," and by the hour she talks to it as though it were a reasoning creature, feeding and scolding it, and giving it medicine, and sometimes whipping it with her knitting-needle. By what chance it became her property I never knew, but it must be regarded as a fortunate event for both. "Nothing in its life became it like the leaving it," any one would say over its dead body, save her whose loving hands so long have fed it. She very rarely goes abroad, unless some gossip more than commonly fresh and pleasant is added to her secrets, or some private grief leads her to consultation with the ever faithful Goodell, with whom she never doubts of sympathy.

"Oh, dear! Goodell," she exclaimed, when last she visited her excellent friend, "I've met with the dreadfulest misfortune! never a man comes into my house without committing some despicable act!"

"Why, Miss Crum! what misfortune has happened?"

"Don't you think," she explained, "I had a housefly, which I had taken great pains to keep alive all the winter, and the other day I sent for

the doctor to prescribe for my pet bird, and the ugly thing must have carried it away in his hat, for I have never seen it since."

"Why, Miss Crum! That *was* a misfortune. But we all have our troubles. A gentleman yesterday happened to put his cane on my beautiful black silk dress, and made a rent in it. But he did not notice the accident. I suppose he did not know anything about it."

And the two verd-antiques sat down to a cup of tea, or rather to many cups, and in the grounds of each successive one Mrs. Goodell read the fortunes of herself and friend.

Both were speedily to get money, and, somewhere, either a black-eyed man or a blue-eyed man was thinking of one of them, and must needs cross water to come to her.

But as I have said, neither of these handsome young fellows had appeared. The water was probably very wide, but this is a point difficult ever to ascertain precisely through a tea-cup.

Joseph Arnold has been long years abroad. He has studied the wonders of nature and of art. He has measured himself with other men, and his confidence in himself has been increased. He has done what his hand found to do; he has learned to love mankind, and in loving, he has learned to pray and to hope; and he has learned that we are

of little account without charity. More than forty years he has lived in the world, and more than thirty of them were wasted in vain and idle schemes for the reformation of society—himself needing most to be reformed—and in cogitating wonders he would do, with a fair chance, and if so many fools were not in his way. In the resolution at last came the opportunity, and he discovered that no greater obstacle than himself ever impeded his advancement in usefulness and reputation. He says often now, with confidence that it is true, that energy, with faith, may retrieve the darkest past that can cast a shadow on the present or the future. This he said long ago, in conversation with Nathan Warburton, but he failed then. Some seeds, chance-sown, however, have sprung up at last, and borne fruit.

“Really, uncle Josey,” said Mrs. Yancey, a day or two after the coming home of her brother, “how very handsome you are grown!”

“It is a beautiful provision,” he answered, “that to those who love us we can never grow old nor plain.”

“Don’t miss a single house,” called Mrs. Yancey to the youngest child, who was just leaving home on the important mission of telling all the neighbors that uncle Joseph was come, and would preach in the old stone church to-morrow.

"Shall I tell the woman who wears the black clothes?" asked the child, pausing, and swinging on the gate.

"It's curious what made you ever be a preacher, Josey," said Mrs. Yancey.

"An eloquent discourse I once heard from a very strange man; a bunch of flowers and a cup of water brought to my sick bed by that poor little black girl who lived with you so many years ago, when she was sick herself, and dying—these, with the beautiful good life of little Nanny, were, I believe, the chief human influences."

"I say, mother, shall I tell the woman that wears the black dress?" asked the boy again; and as he swung to and fro, the gate, on one hinge previously, gave way, and he fell to the ground.

"Get right up and run along," said the mother; "it didn't hurt you much." But, with his dress doubly disordered and soiled, and a spot, blue and purple, on his forehead, the child came stumbling toward the house.

An old lean cow, and two or three starved pigs, walked over the prostrate gate into the yard; another child was sent to call William to put it up, and the hurt idler was told to bathe the bruised places in cold water. But Mrs. Yancey did not let either accident disturb her.

"Get the basin of water for him, Nancy," said

the brother, imperiously, as though it were a thing quite impossible for the child to do, "and hush his crying, with some little show of motherly kindness." As he spoke he arose, with a solemn air, and set out as his own herald, walking abstractedly over the fallen gate.

It was summer time, and the sunset of no lovelier afternoon had ever brightened the world. The air was sweet with perfume from the hay-fields, and the mowers, with scythes on their shoulders, were going homeward, while the waiting watch-dog "bayed deep-mouthed welcome." The farmers sat at their open doors, some with the last newspaper, and some with babies on their knees, while within might be seen the white table-cloth and the busy housewife giving promise of pleasant consummations of the duties of the day.

To Arnold the world had never looked so beautiful, and never had he been so entirely happy, as when, one after another, old and familiar voices welcomed him home. As he saw the glory of the sunset, and drank in the sweet air, and thought of those cordial greetings, he repeated to himself fragments of grateful songs that echoed to the sweetest music through his soul.

The mist of purple fire faded in the west, and the green reaches of trees stood against the clear sky, before the round was completed, for he was

often detained to see how one child had grown, and hear of the marriage of another, and how another had died far away in adventurous quests of fortune or distinction.

By the cross-roads stood the old stone meeting-house, looking as it had looked in the unforgotten years of his own boyhood. Where the turf had been smooth when he went away, there were graves, with long grass wrapping them warmly about, and others upon which no sod had yet grown, but the narrow paths wound among them, and the trees bent over them, as he had seen the paths wind and the trees wave over graves on which he had looked with hurried awe in the twilights of the days when he was a child. The birds now and then fluttered uneasily, as he passed beneath the branches in which they rested, and the wind rustled the leaves with a low and melancholy sound, which seemed more mournful than any such sound had ever been to him.

Suddenly over the silence there came a low, soft song, pleasantly interrupting his reveries. "There is no habitation that I know of hereabouts," he said, and listening, he was at first tempted to believe it "some fairy creature of the elements;" but presently he felt assured the tenderness and the touching pathos belonged to humanity, and doubly assured when he discovered, on the opposite side

of the graveyard, the glimmering of a light. As he approached, he saw that it proceeded from a cottage, hidden among the trees, a little removed from the ruins of a cabin long ago in decay. A pretty cottage it seemed, but so low, and so buried among the trees and shrubbery, that he had failed of seeing it, except for the song. Leaning against the trunk of a walnut tree, he listened till the last echo was still. There was something in the voice that went directly to his heart, and more than once he lifted his eyes in the hope of seeing the singer, but the door was closed, and though the window was open, the white curtain was dropped over it, and with impatient curiosity he was compelled to await the answer of his summons for admission.

The lamp was shaded within, so that he saw imperfectly when the door unclosed and its ray fell on a woman, whose smile was sad as her song. His errand required but a moment, but he saw that the person he addressed was not youthful; that her face was very pale; that her hair was of the goldenest auburn, and her dress of the deepest mourning.

Her manner was quiet, and her voice musically low; but, though such manner and voice must needs be civil, he could not fail of perceiving that his apology for intruding on a stranger—that he

thought himself acquainted with all the people of the neighborhood—and his announcement of a sermon the next day, were received with perfect and undissembled indifference.

CHAPTER XVII.

At church with meek and unaffected grace
His looks adorned the venerable place.

DEARIED VILLAGE.

Oh night,

And storm, and darkness! ye are wondrous strong.

CHILDE HAROLD.

THE Sabbath came on, calm and solemn as the previous day had been lovely and serene. The birds that had filled with their sweet chattering all the orchards and meadows, as the evening gathered the long swathes of crimson into thick purple shades, flew deep into the forest, where their songs were hushed in silence, except here and there a clear and melodious hymn which seemed by the solitary worshiper intended only for fit audience in Heaven. The glad and tremulous ripple that ran along the woods to the touches of the breeze, at sunset, sounded now like the surge of a far-off wave, though the tree slanting over the mill-stream was reflected in the still surface below, where white ruffling waves scudded so swiftly sometimes.

By the cool and gnarled roots along the bank, the sheared sheep and the curly-fleeced lambs lay together. They had nibbled their fill while the morning dew was on the pastures.

One pearly fragment of cloud, its edges intermingled and lost in the blue, lay along the north, and all the sky beside was clear.

Across the partly mown meadows went children with baskets of flowers—dainty things, drooping already on their spindling and wilted stems, though they had been but an hour from the cool and woody hollows where they grew. Flocks of plump and happy looking quails walked before them, their heads falling and rising to their steps. They were not afraid. Should the rambles come too close, with a whirr they would lift themselves up, and be gone.

Toward noon, the four roads near the crossing began to be filled with people on their way to church. What a beautiful picture they presented, as one after another they walked down the deeply worn path, and with slow and reverent steps entered the house, and joined in the already sounding psalm.

Among the staid matrons, dressed in a sort of half mourning, which they had worn ever since they buried some relation, long, long ago, sat the rural beauties and belles, whom their mothers call-

ed giddy and thoughtless—less for their pink and blue ribbons, and riches of curls, perhaps, than that in spite of the restraining influences about them they now and then glanced toward the opposite side of the house, where the dark locks of sturdy young men contrasted with the white hairs of patriarchs and fathers.

If the young people on going home could remember the text, which they were always asked to repeat, it was accepted as an evidence that their hearts were not wholly occupied with the vanities of the world, and there was shame on their faces who failed to answer rightly the never forgotten question.

What a time of congratulations there was at the conclusion of the service! All were surprised and pleased that Joseph Arnold, whom they had known ever since he was a boy, could preach such a sermon; and all must shake hands and, at least, smile their satisfaction. Every one who was bidden the previous night was there, and many others—every one, except the lady in black—she came not that Sabbath, nor the next, nor the next.

"Come and sit here," said Mrs. Yancey, one evening, to her brother. She was under a tree, at the door, and, as he joined her she said, "I only wanted you to hear Hagar sing."

As he listened to her sad sweet song he remem-

bered that it was that which he heard on his solitary walk the night of his arrival.

"Hagar—who is she?" he asked; adding, "I never listened to so melodious a voice."

"I only know her name is Hagar, and that she lives alone in the cottage you can just see through the trees. I think she is out of her mind, for when she came here, don't you think, she brought with her a little coffin, that is buried among the roses by the door. Almost every night you may hear her sing, when she is 'at home.'"

"And where is she when not at home?" asked the brother.

It was a sultry evening in August; not a breath stirred the dusty leaves; and, fanning herself violently with a part of her apron, which she gathered in her hand, Mrs. Yancey explained that nobody was ever so kind where there was sickness or death, or any misfortune, and that every one loved her for the good she did, but that she would join in no pleasure, nor ever go from the cottage in which she lived, except on some errand of mercy.

Suddenly the twilight deepened into night. The cattle thrust their nostrils into the air, and hurried towards their accustomed shelter. The blackness was untimely and terrible.

"Was that thunder?" asked Arnold, as a low

rumbling came on the wind, which went gloomily surging through the tree above them.

"We are going to have a storm," said the sister; and, holding out one hand, she exclaimed, "there, I felt a drop: we had best go in."

And, as they rose, a quick and sharp peal of thunder broke from the purple blackness above, and rolled and rattled down the west, and died in loose, heavy, and distant reverberations; and before they could reach the door, a blinding flash lit up the scene with a bluish and awful flame, and another sharp peal broke almost over their heads—a peal that made courage itself afraid. Then came the rain down the hot and close atmosphere, that smelt of dust as the torrents dashed against the ground. The intense fury of the storm subsided, and the shuddering heart grew stronger, as the blackness was lifted a little, and the thunder was heard withdrawing into the skies, which were darker than the most impenetrable night.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Yancey, going toward the window, "if William was out in this rain."

"He is coming," answered the children; "that was the gate." And as they opened the door, the fresh cool air came in, sweet as if from seas of lilies. The eave-ducts were still overflowing, and little green cisterns of water stood about the yard, while along the roadside the gutters ran black and

muddy. Suddenly, from the open door, the children came huddling in, looking pale and frightened, catching at their mother's skirts, and, in tones between terror and wonder, saying, "Oh, mother, what is it?"

The old dog, that always went with his master to the fields, came in very wet, crouching low, and looking at his mistress, ominously whining. And close behind came he for whom they watched, not as he had ever come before—but dead, and borne by two of his neighbors.

The storm had overtaken him on his way from the fields, and, stopping to shelter himself beneath a tree, the messenger whose eyes are blinded with their own fierce light, struck him down. Death is a fearful thing in any shape—in any form—but death by sudden violence carries terror always to the bravest heart.

A night of confusion and sorrow followed. The dead man was conveyed into the best room, and dressed for the grave. Poor Mrs. Yancey! in losing William she had lost all. How should she be comforted? The little children sat together very still, for they were afraid 'when through the open door they saw, by the window where they had seen him sit so many times, all that had been their father—a rigid and frightful corpse,—the white sheet sunken against the head and the hands and

the feet, leaving that awful outline that no living shape assumes. No wonder they cried out, hiding their faces.

Strange men and women filled the house—twice as many as could do any good. Gathered in little groups of two or three, they talked of all the good qualities of the departed—of when and where the sad event occurred. Some said the whole family might have been killed, if the lightning had struck the house; that they ought to be thankful, and not give way to such despair; and others pitied poor Mrs. Yancey; "What will become of her now?" they said; "the farm has long been mortgaged, and there are many creditors to claim the little that is left."

The supper that waited for the coming of the husband and father, was removed untasted. The children could not be persuaded to go to bed—all so strange—so bewildering; and the good women of the neighborhood wrapped them in shawls, and seated them by the fire, while their clothes were brushed and mended for the funeral.

All night the preparation was going forward—some busy cutting and making up mourning for the widowed woman, others putting the house in order for the funeral, and others cooking and attending to other duties in the kitchen. Whatever could be found was used for any purpose for which

it chanced to be available. The tablecloth was divided into towels, and the ham, that should have served for a week, boiled at once; and all the little which the widow possessed was thus likely to be destroyed in a day and without necessity.

In the midst of the disorder, muffled in her black veil and shawl, came Hagar, quietly, unobtrusively. The direction of affairs was instinctively yielded to her, and soon all was order.

How beautiful she looked in her ministry of mercy! Her very tone was comforting. There was no officious counsel, no authoritative direction, but all felt her influence, though it was silent as the falling of the dew. Her smile drew hearts to her wherever she went, and her hands were full of blessings. The weak and weeping mourner grew calm and strong when she was near, and the orphans were no longer afraid. One of the few, she was,

“More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.”

The morning came up clear and beautiful; the mists curled about the bases of the hills, and reached upward, and upward, till they were lost in the sunshine. The birds sung all the more jocundly, for the heat and the storm which had kept them still.

The late growth of grass was fresh with the rain, and in the pastures cattle frolicked as with new

life, and sleek as if fattened in stalls. Here and there a tree was to be seen rifted by lightning, the bark partly torn away, perhaps, and the top splint-ered and hanging downward.

Under a tall locust, near the house of Mrs. Yancey, men and boys were gathered all day, talking of the rent trunk, and examining bits of the bark peeled aside, and wondering why that tree should have been struck rather than another. The gutters had emptied their muddy contents in the mill-stream, which was greatly enlarged, but no click of the mill was heard to-day, nor were there any teams busy. A kind of Sabbath stillness spread itself all over the neighborhood.

The storm had broken paths among the corn, and swept the bridge from the creek; but the stalks were not straightened, nor the bridge rebuilt.

Arnold sat by the window alone—sometimes abstracted, and sometimes looking toward the hill, where men were digging beneath the trees. Many times the woman who was called Hagar passed by, but without seeming to notice him.

Interest attaches to mystery always, and Arnold felt strongly inclined to speak to her; for, aside from any romance connected with the accounts of her to which he had listened, she seemed a most winning and lovable person. Her sad and sweet smile, drew you toward her at once, and in spite

of yourself your arms reached out to protect her. Some such feeling took possession of his heart, and even amid these scenes of mourning his eyes wandered in her steps as if they were every one a spell.

At length she drew near the window and dropped the curtain, that his eyes might a little longer be spared the sight of the heaped earth.

"Thank you, Hagar," he said, with something of his old eccentricity, and as if her name were familiar to him.

A blush mantled on her cheek, and she was turning hastily away when he detained her, by saying, "I was not thinking of that new grave: I was thinking of you."

His manner was so gentle and respectful, and his tone so benignant, that offense was impossible, though she could not help but feel that such an address was very free for a stranger, and ill suited for the occasion; and she replied, with serious coldness, "I fear, sir, I am but an unworthy subject for your thoughts."

"You know best, perhaps; but my reflections may not have been unprofitable to you, if you will hear them."

The blood mounted to her cheek again; and, between anger and curiosity, she remained silent.

"I have surprised you," he said, "in your fast-

ness of secrecy. I do not condemn, but would comfort and save you."

"I am penitent, great God, I am penitent," she said, hiding her tearful eyes with her hair.

"Hagar," called some one without, and, withdrawing, she did not again return.

CHAPTER XVIII.

He had ceased
To live within himself; she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all. BYRON.

He loved but one,
And that loved one, alas! could not be his.
 LAMB.

DAYS came and went, and every rising of the sun showed the world fairer than it had been before since William's death. He was not indeed forgotten by any of the family, and even Mrs. Yancey's philosophy failed of bringing rest under so profound an affliction; but habit is to half the world content, and the good woman rapidly learned to see without a fluttering of the heart his vacant place at the table, and the night come down without a signal of his return from the fields. The light step, the martyr smile, the shows of mourning, passed away, and all things in the house moved in the old ways.

The gentle and patient Hagar, like that bird

which never is seen but when the night or storm approaches, went with Sorrow, and seemed to have charmed that shadowy enemy from every other guest, to be her sole companion. After the brief interview with Arnold which is described in the last chapter, she avoided any opportunity for another. Whatever his talents, the nobility of his aims, or the bravery of the will with which they were prosecuted, Mr. Joseph Arnold, like nearly all men whose earlier years have been passed among the poor and ill educated, was destitute of those instincts of gentleness and refinement which are most essential in society. The laws of courtesy have grown out of the necessities of men's natures, and are to be as implicitly obeyed as the least questioned commands in the decalogue. The man who despises formalities is in most cases himself to be despised. But with all his abruptness and obtrusiveness, Arnold had many really admirable qualities, of the heart as well as of the understanding, and he now unwillingly felt that the recluse with whom he had thus been brought into contact was destined to have a peculiar influence over his life.

When the congregation assembled the next Sabbath, it might have been observed that his eyes were lifted anxiously whenever any mourning robe darkened the aisle. While he was reading the last hymn before the sermon, the expected form glided

in with silent steps, and though his glances did not wander from the page before him, and a close veil hid the face of the woman, the recognition was mutual.

"Surely my history is known to him," Hagar thought, as in the unfolding of his sentences she saw glimpse after glimpse of her own interior life. She shrank half afraid from his glances, as they fell, or she fancied that they did so, on herself, whenever a thought was uttered that seemed to have been suggested by her experience.

Sisterly affection did not too much warp Mrs. Yancey's judgment when she told her brother, in the simplicity of her heart, he had grown handsome. Though something beyond forty, he had never in earlier life looked so well. He had cast off the diffidence that cramped his action, the affectations that made him clownish, the shabbiness that disfigured him: he had grown into manhood. The religious impulses, which in youth came to him by fits and starts, were now drawn out to the habitual tenor of life; and nothing in the world is so elevating and refining, as the sense of religion, influencing a man in his domestic and social relations.

In early life, "the elements were so mixed in him," that it would have been difficult to either love or hate him. He made no effort to gain

friends. He enclosed all his better self, as it were, in a husk, and then, for neglect induced by his own manner and conduct, became a misanthrope.

One day, ill in health, disheartened for the want of love, and weary of waiting for some great opportunity, of which he had been a dreamer, he turned his face from the wall, with a groan, and saw on the table before him a cup of cold water and some flowers—the gift of a feeble, unattractive, and little regarded child. The words that had often troubled the fountain of his life came back—the words of the strangely eloquent Warburton—“Shall her life of beauty be barren to me?”

From that time, by a strong effort of the will, he was changed, his life became real and earnest, he entered upon studies necessary for the service he proposed to himself, and the little village where he was born gave him work enough to do. There rained from his tongue no tempests of eloquence, with which to win souls; but when he chose, his words were sharp arrows, from which there was no escape, and each hearer felt as if his preaching were especially for him.

It was, perhaps, more than anything else, the fine intelligence speaking through his face that made him beautiful. He was changed in heart and in life, but not altogether lifted out of his nature, nor above the weaknesses and the needs of

our daily experience. Individually, he seemed not to love men, or women, but, melancholy and isolated, he wandered in the woods or fields, or shut himself in his own study, during all the week. In ministering to his flock, his heart seemed overflowing with love to them and to God. He was very dear to them, active in the discharge of every duty incidental to his profession, ready with counsel, and kind in all the ministrations of mercy, yet his love was not a familiar thing, to be kept about their daily lives. Without being arrogant, or haughty, or cold, there was something in his collected and unbending manner, and clear and penetrating glances, that repelled all close approaches. The grasp of the most cordial greeting was returned with only the mildest pressure, and the laughing salutation was presently forgotten in sober civility. Diligent and sincere worker as he was, a part of his great field was untilled, and his people, especially the young, feared him as much as they loved him ; for among them he was as a stranger. They admired, respected, and almost revered him ; but more was scarcely possible without a change in his very nature.

Yet he did all that he could. His large love embraced the world. It was expansive, but not flowing out warm and soft, from the close folding of one human heart, widening and widening, till it

embraced all. He had sold away many of his darling idols, and given their price to the poor; but the great necessity of human nature was the thing which he yet lacked.

The time came when, but for one dark hindrance, he might have been swept into the full light. Already on the day of which I have been speaking, as he leaned from the desk in the pleading of general interests, one, more especial, fixed often his glance and his thought.

When the services were ended, many came around him, as the rural custom was, but though he did not avoid, he seemed not to seek their greetings, and, as soon as might be, he passed hastily from the house, with a look of solemn austerity.

By the smooth mound, where no spear of grass had as yet taken root, Mrs. Yancey stood, and beside her, speaking no word, but tenderly pressing her hand, was Hagar, who had not paused with the rest. As the preacher came by, no arm was outstretched to support the mourner, or draw her away, and only saying, without any previous recognition, "I am glad, Hagar, to see you at church," he passed on.

After that day, Hagar was sure to be at every morning and evening service. She came and went alone, speaking no word to any one. Curiosity gradually died away, and the villagers came to

regard her as a poor, half-crazed woman, but harmless and, gentle—to be pitied, watched, and, if necessary, supported and protected.

But the pastor thought of her differently. One evening as she sat by the open window, gazing down on the little grave beneath, a footstep pressed the sward, and, looking up, she saw Joseph Arnold stand before her. For a moment he remained silent; and then directing his eyes to the point which had engrossed her attention, he said, "What is the meaning of this, Hagar?"

The woman did not answer, and he continued, "The softest interpretations were selfishness, or insanity; but there are those who might find other motives for the avoidance of consecrated ground. You have no right to bring reproaches on yourself, if innocent, nor any longer to seek concealment, if"—he said no more, but looked the thought he did not speak.

"Who are you, who thus invade my privacy?" she said, suddenly recovering from some surprise and confusion, "and by what authority do you question my motives or my innocence? I have not sought you, nor disturbed you in any way. Leave me alone. So much I ask of justice and of charity."

But far from being moved by the offended dignity of her manner, and her last command, he

calmly, as if in pity, approached, and seated himself near her.

"Hagar," he said, in tones of the tenderest interest, "I must stay till I have answered your questions, and thus justified myself."

Tears stood in her eyes, and the angry spot burned itself out in her cheek; and though she did not grant with words the implied request, she did not refuse it, and the intruder went on: "By the authority of my sacred office I make inquest of all characters by which I am surrounded, and by your virtual confession of sin, I question your innocence. You have not sought me, it is true; but how know you that you have not disturbed me?"

"I am but an humble and weak woman," answered Hagar, her voice trembling, "and will not oppose my convictions to your judgment or reasoning. But am I not for my motives answerable to the same tribunal as yourself? And if I have acknowledged guilt, by my general bearing to the world, why should I make further confession to you, or to any one?"

"And for the last?" said the preacher.

"If I have disturbed you I can only be sorry."

"It is so—and what are you now? You disturb me, I said truly."

"Then I am sorry now."

"And nothing more?"

"What can I more?"

"Everything, if you will."

"You deceive yourself. I am alone, and as you seem to know, an outcast from the world, seeking, in continual prayer and penitence, to atone my sin, or to stay back a little the vengeance of Heaven. Oh! leave me. I am done with mortality, save as the servant of such as suffer, and you need no help."

"Yes, Hagar, that is what I need—help, and no one but you can give it me. Till I saw you, I went through the journey of life alone, and very desolate and wretched I was, until the baptism of Christian faith was given me. This new life was to me—is to me—the greatest good; and not till I saw you did I know there was a feeling of my nature unsatisfied—the need of closer sympathy, of nearer human communion than I had found. You have no need that I should tell you, nor to be surprised at the discovery, that I love you."

"Speak not to me of love," she replied, solemnly, mournfully, lifting her hand between her white cheek and the steadfast eyes that gazed on her. "You do not know me. There is between us a wall, black as the pit, and high as Heaven. Seek not to know any more, but leave me, and forget this sudden impulse—for it is nothing more. My

arms would lie about your neck like a curse. Hope nothing, ask nothing of me."

"Do I speak as if moved by a sudden impulse? No, I know what I say, and what I seek, and what I would have, and shall have, in spite of yourself. I do not know you, you say. Have you not been aware of my near presence, as, night after night, you have sung in the moonlight songs which seemed only meant for me? Did you not feel that I was praying for you, as you wept by the grave of——"

"Great God! and have you then been a spy on my actions and my words?" she exclaimed, passionately. "And for what are you come now? to reproach and mock me? Oh! if you ever knew the need of pity, spare me."

"I beseech you, do not again interrupt me. Your love would not be a curse to me. Since your sad smile first dawned on me, and I heard your first gentle words, I have been more and more drawn from isolation, and in human love I have learned more and more my necessities. I come not to unravel your history, or pass judgment on your life. I love you, and whatever be that past on which you throw yourself as on a consuming fire, I would unite my life with yours, and make you sharer of whatever awaits me, in time and in eternity."

"I have abjured all human happiness. I would not love you if I could. My life is an everlasting penance."

"For what this penance is resolved, I do not know, I do not seek to know. You have sinned and suffered. What matters to me the precise nature of the offense or the expiation? Is he who rejects God's good gifts sinless any more than he who abuses them by excessive indulgence? Will the flowers bloom for you any brighter in Paradise that you trample them here? Have you not, after all, mistaken the Great Work, which does not lift us through fasting and immolation up to Heaven, but sweetly draws Heaven down to us, and makes the mortal the beginning of immortal joys? You have only to open the windows beneath this humble roof, and the angels will come in."

"Your words sound well; but sin abases itself. The snake's head hides not under the dove's wing, but grovels in the dust, as is fit. The love of a pure heart and lofty soul is a thing of exceeding beauty; but, knowing my deformity, if you could come down and clothe me with it as with a garment, in the ashes of lost innocence, you could plant here no self-respect. It were like a green vine twining itself about a ruin, trembling at every breath. Go back into the sunshine, and leave me to the dark."

Arnold arose as she concluded, with the same calm confidence that had characterized all his movements, and pointing to the little mound below the window, on which the moonlight was trembling, he said, "When the grass *there* shall be dead and faded, I will come again. In the meantime, temper your heart as you will, I defy you to crush out entirely its yearning for human love. When we meet, it will be to part never, or forever." And, without waiting a reply, he withdrew, as silently and mysteriously as he had come.

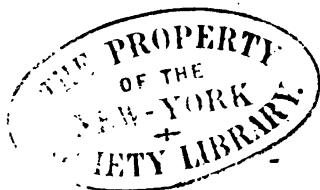
"Shall a chance breath trouble the fountain that it has been the work of a life-time to still?" said Hagar; and, closing the window, she sought forgetfulness in sleep—in vain.

It was a melancholy life she surveyed, and with all its suffering, all its sin, the retrospect brought a feeling kindred with joy—the sense of submission, and expiation, under which martyrs have sung their divinest triumphs.

It may be indeed that the highest happiness of life is always touched with sadness. Love and Faith dwell ever in the haunted house of Fear. The lights of the birth chamber stream across the narrow bed where the pleasant morning touches the eyelids of the sleepers no more, where the white hands of the little children are never unlock-

ed for the flowers that hang over their dark un-rocking cradles.

Even the incarnate Redeemer was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—discrowned of immortality—crowned with thorns.



CHAPTER XIX.

ARE we not one! Are we not joined by Heaven!
Each interwoven with the other's fate!

ROWE.

'Tis far off;

And rather like a dream, than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE placid and luxurious autumn faded slowly away. The minister became more and more fraternal with his people, and every Sabbath his benedictions fell more and more lovingly and tenderly as he glanced down on a congregation that was becoming one of friends as well as of pupils; and as he stayed for smiles and kind inquiries and the expression of affectionate hopes, the bonds of sympathy and fellowship grew all the while more strong, and beautiful in their strength.

As the widowed sister wept by the gray stone, that stood scarcely higher than the whitening grass, a kind arm was about her, and a soothing voice told her of the fairer and wider mansions in our Father's house, till her heart's half-complaining

softened to gratitude, that she had yet a brother's companionship and affection.

And all these Sabbaths came Hagar, muffled in black, and wearing the same sad look of resignation—silently came and went—no bounding in her step, nor exultation in her smile. Had she crushed out the human yearning for human love, and within the cell of perpetual penance, locked herself in barren seclusion?

At length mid winter came, with cold and terrible storms, and cheerless solitudes—winter, grand, gloomy, and stern, with never a smile, never a tear, no hedgerow flowers with hues beyond all art, no dancing streams with sweeter music than the flute's,—winter, made to compel men into affections that have in them dearer joys than all the fairest gifts ever brought to castles of indolence by voluptuous summer—winter, that clothing as with draperies of death the external world, leads to such cultivation of the heart, and such development of the interior life, as gives, in the long-years and ages, its sweet proportion of beauty to our human nature.

It was night. All day the snow had fallen, and fallen, till the smooth level had hid the graves about the old church, while above them the limbs of the trees were weighed heavily down; but at sunset the blustering winds came sweeping from their far caverns, and white drifts were heaped, and

the laden boughs shaken bare. As the shadows deepened, there came out no moon nor star. Nothing was heard but the moaning of the wind. Even the owl, close-muffled from the storm, made no complaint—it was so terrible and desolate a night. The cock drew his proud head against his ruffling feathers, and forgot to cry the hour; and the watch-dog changed his accustomed bay to a lonesome howl, he was so cold. And so were the lambs, dimpling the hill-side snow, and bleating piteously to the winds.

From the cottage of Hagar shone a little pallid light. Was she alone, and listening to the storm? The tempest in her bosom was more fierce than the storm without. With an iron hand she put down her heart that thrilled to the whisper of love.

"I thought," she said, speaking very calmly, "I had enough to endure before; but you, my friend, have laid upon me the heaviest of all crosses. Patiently as I may, I must submit to the burden."

"Then you love me, Hagar; and yet seal my doom in darkness. Listen for but a moment. You saw, perhaps, from your window, that a grave was made to-day in the churchyard—that there were few to bury the dead, and no mourners. I was among those who saw the falling of the clods and the snow on the coffin. I saw the old man die, and performed the funeral service. He had

never wife nor child, but in his lonesome cabin lived and ended his life alone; and when I saw the steady hand of a stranger remove the coarse notched cloth from the face, that we might see the last of his mortality, I shuddered and stood back: not afraid of death, but of such a death. On the livid and frightful features there was no smile, such as must have kindled, even in death, beneath the eyes of love. In the thin white hairs, above the wrinkled forehead, no soft hand of infancy or maidenhood had ever bathed itself. The eyes had grown blind, and the blue lids dropped over them, without having seen the sunshine that perfected the world; and the mouth had fallen from roseate fullness, to a sunken and purple gap, unpressed by affection's kiss, and it seemed hungry yet.

'To die, and not be missed, is infamy.'

You can save me, Hagar. When the leaves were dying I told you I would come now—that we should meet to part never, or forever. Have you decided? I wait, till your hands crown me with leaves dropping perpetual dew, or hang a weight about my neck to drag me down through all time."

"God knows how my heart is bleeding," answered Hagar. "I am powerless to help you.—Nothing can save me from the infamy of which you speak. Long ago I set sharp thorns in my pillow,

and your head could not rest there. I love you—you know I love you. But I have loved another, and we are divided.”

Arnold moved impatiently, and spoke almost coldly, “You have loved—I care not when, nor whom, so you love not another now. The young plants are fair enough, but the full harvest is not gathered in the May. In youth, love is little more than the sparkle, that may be quickly dried up, or brushed aside; but in manhood and womanhood, there is depth in passion, which cannot be previously conceived of. The young bole uplifts itself when the storm is past, but the mature tree, if it fall, must perish.”

“I know it all—I feel it all,” answered Hagar. “Yet I half exult that a new weight is laid upon me. I was becoming inured to the old. It were a small thing to lay down my life in your arms; but to give up my life’s life, to push back the sunrise, and hug to my bosom the dark—this is what I must do. If you love me, go, I beseech you, go back into the sunshine, and——”

The hand she upraised was put softly down, and kisses prisoned the speaking lips in silence.

That pressure unlocked from its ice the crimson, and for a moment the hearts of the lovers beat responsive, and a moment only, for the next Hagar stood erect and composed. As one might forcibly

shut the fluttering wing of a bird, she had stilled her heart, and her voice was low and terribly calm, as she said, "We must part, and forever."

"Forever! Hagar, forever? At least, tell me why." And all the agony of expiring hope was in the appeal.

She stood silent a moment, and then answered, "If there be any farther humiliation, any deeper suffering than I have known, I will meet it. Sit down, and hear me speak."

"Not till you have heard me. And, as I annihilate this distance you placed but now between us," he said, embracing her, "I annihilate all obstacles to our union at once, and forever."

"It is a beautiful dream," she answered, "and I would that it might last."

"It may last, Hagar; it shall last while we live, while our souls live."

"If it could," she repeated—"but no, it cannot be. I saw from the first that I could love you, and I did not avoid the temptation, but Sabbath after Sabbath fed upon your smile and your words, and day after day, and night after night walked in visions by your side, nursing into full life the love which I meant to battle with and to baffle. This was to be my crowning triumph. And would you tempt me," she continued, reproachfully, "to sell away the pure fountain of

eternity for the troubled waters of time? But why need we repeat this sort of conversation? Is not true love the victor always?"

The time of parting came, and the forever was changed to never.

"One request, dear love, before I go. Never dig up the buried past any more, and voluntarily surrender yourself to torment. You need, my poor Hagar, the shelter of a great and unfaltering love; and with something to protect, to lean upon me, I shall grow stronger as well as you."

The promise was sadly yielded, and then and there in her bewildering happiness, Hagar sealed on the forehead of her lover the betrothal that might have secured the happiness of both, as far as felicity may be secured in love.

"One star has broken through a cloud," Arnold said, pointing upward. "See how clear and steady it shines! I accept the omen."

"There is but one star," answered Hagar, very sadly, "and that is among clouds. Alas! there is no perfect joy below. Clouds are ready to sweep across the stars, and the few flowers grow along a hard and toilsome way. Is it worth our while to pause on this little atom of time, and gaze at the one till it is obscured, or gather the other to wither in our hands?"

"Life, as you say, is an atom; and time a very

little thing, when measured against eternity. When we lift up our eyes, and see above us a universe of worlds, held at their places in the illimitable space, and moving with accuracy to the will of Omniscience, our own little planet dwarfs indeed, and all the lives that men have lived since the creation shrink within a point on the dial, and we are overwhelmed with astonishment that God should be mindful of us. But when we remember that our lives are sparks from the eternal essence, and themselves destined to exist forever, this humanity of ours seems worthy of its declared dignity and destiny."

"Our life is great only as a state of probation; great only as the accidents and burdens and ills connected with it, bear upon the future. Viewed in this light, life indeed assumes another aspect. Let us part now."

"Not so, Hagar; I feel as if, should I go from your presence now, the daylight just breaking would never open any more. I seem on the edge of a bright world, and I fear to turn away, lest blank darkness swallow it up. Tell me again that you love me."

"I love you, with all the devotion of my nature I love you," she replied, but the words seemed to contain rather a prophecy of sorrow, than an assurance of hope.

And so, under the wild night, while the wind tossed hither and thither the snow, and the one star trembled among the clouds, the lovers parted.

All over the neighborhood there was great rejoicing. "The minister is going to be married," said one to another; and every one seemed to regard the event as one in some sense needful to his own happiness.

With strange invocations of rhyme, the moon was charmed, that her faint light might reveal in visions the color of the eyes and hair which should belong to the yet unknown lover.

Many were the gay meetings of rural beaux and belles, and love-makings, begun in jest, ended in the "sober certainty of waking bliss."

Ah me, what merry nights they were, when, in the great sled, half sunken in straw, and wrapped in coverlets, the "old folks" ploughed through drifted snow, and faced the rough wind, to visit some neighbor a dozen miles away, perhaps. What merry nights for the young and careless, and especially when the approaching nuptials led so easily the discourse into the sweetest of all channels.

Bright from the homestead windows streamed the light of the log-heap fires, and often the midnight cock crowed twiced and thrice before the circle around the hearth was broken.

The old had so many memories to renew, and

the young so many hopes to unfold, while here the round iron tea-kettle sang of muffins and honey, materializing and humanizing the most serious fancies, and saddest recollections of perilous adventures, warning ghosts, and unhappy death-beds; and there the shaggy hickory bark sent up a thousand sparkles, as the laughing girls walked backward to bake on the fire-shovel the cake mixed without salt, which must be eaten without a word to break the spell, as shining and soulful eyes spoke unutterable things.

How could they hear the striking of the old clock, sounded it never so loudly, for the joyous tumult in their hearts; or how see the dial plate, lifted close to the ceiling though it were, and shining in the ruddy glow of the hot coals—how see this, for the smiling faces between?

And so the hours were narrowed into moments, and the sober work-horses came prankishly trotting and snorting to the door, breaking in upon the midst of hilarity, and making the children wonder why their parents had come so early.

New dresses must be made, and new and stylish fashions introduced, which the careful mother thought hazardous to be worn in mid-winter. But the daughter looked so pretty with her plump arms and shoulders bare, and in her head-dress of roses, they could not refuse that it should be worn—"just

once," and half believed, as they said, that pride would keep the child warm enough.

And the bridal morning came. The garlands were fresh all about the church, and the happy pairs filled the pews and aisles, eagerly expectant. At last there was a movement at the door, and a step on the threshold. The clergyman was there, and alone.

CHAPTER XX.

ABOUT his shelves,
A beggarly account of empty boxes,
Green earthen pots, bladders and musty seeds,
Remnants of packthread, and old cakes of roses,
Were thinly scattered to make up a show.

SHAKESPEARE.

Far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife,
They kept the even tenor of their way.

GRAY.

WHEN Arnold that morning entered the little cottage which had been the home of Hagar, she was not there. In his search he was soon startled by signs of her removal, but there was no clue to the direction in which she was gone. Whoever had assisted her, thus suddenly to turn aside from affection, and rest, was perhaps heir to the scanty property she had left, and would keep her secret. Her lover paused a moment by the still scarcely extinguished fire on the hearth, and on the mantle saw a small packet inscribed with his name. He broke the seal, and for an hour—insensible of the increasing cold—forgetful of those who waited his

appearance at the church—he read the secret and painful history in which was involved not Hagar's fate alone, but the disappointment of the dearest and fondest hopes he himself had ever dared to cherish. The manuscript was as follows :

The past, my poor friend, presses me from you. I cannot be your wife, and my heart aches, not so much for myself, as for you, while I write this necessary and irrevocable decision. If I might have done so, I would gladly have gone hence with the dark history I am about to unfold, locked in my own brain, that I might have lived in your memory, a vision of the night and the stars, that faded in the morning.

As I begin my task my memories go back beyond that portion of my life in which my destiny was woven, and the tearful leisure of the few nights before me, until we shall at last have parted, I will devote to a record of the recollections which are apt to hover about my heart. If they seem trifling to you, it will not be while I myself am thought of with any tenderness—and after that time how you regard the reminiscences of my unfolding and decaying will be of no more moment to me than to yourself.

It is many years ago that I was a little innocent child, gentle and loving; but my parents were

poor, and the toils of their hard and rough journey made them negligent of me. I do not remember of ever being kissed in childhood, even by my mother. I do not think I ever was. I remember seeing her always at work, and the patient and weary look that she wore. My father, I felt always, was not a good man. He often spoke harshly to my mother, when at home, but he was not much there, and I know that I was gladdest when he was gone. I could not bear to see the tears in my mother's eyes, and have her tell me to go out and play, and that I would never be so happy again, when I wonderingly stood about her, anxious to soothe her sorrow, and yet half fearful of approaching her. It was a sad pastime, my solitary playing, for I had no sisters, and never but one brother, and he many years younger than I. Sometimes I sat in the shade, and tied grapes into a long chain, wondering whether I could ever make enough to reach round the world; and sometimes I climbed to a small broken glass, which hung so high that neither my father nor my mother could see within it, I thought. It was a feat, I remember, difficult to accomplish, and only by the aid of a little chair, set on the table, could I, even by standing on tip-toe, see myself in it at all. The arrangement of my hair, which I had been told was golden and pretty, was one of my favorite occupations, not-

withstanding that my mother often told me I had better be learning to sweep. I knew it not at the time, but I know now that we must have been very poor. Our few articles of furniture were of a ruder fashion than I have ever seen since. I never went from home, except once, when I remember going with my mother to visit a sick relation of hers. On that occasion she curled my hair, and I wore a new dress, made of an old one, which in some remote time had been my grandmother's. I had no bonnet, no shoes—but the first I had never had, and the last I supposed were not to be worn in the summer. We walked across the fields a long way, and I grew weary (though I said I was not) before we reached the house. At last we came in view of it, or rather in view of the hollow in which it stood. "We are almost there," my mother said; and, as she seated me on the topmost fence-rail, and picked the briars from my feet, I must have cried, so hot and tired was I, but for the novelty before me. They were rich people I was to see, my mother said, and I must behave very nicely. There yet lay between us and the house a field, that seemed to me interminable—a part in stubble and a part newly plowed. The heat twinkled against the ground, and, in the shade of a distant tree the plow-boy was resting his team. When we approached, he renewed his labor,

and I walked in the new furrow, close behind him, to the end. How cool and moist the ground felt to my feet. He kindly assisted us over the fence, lifting me in his arms, and I remember he called me a pretty girl, and gave me some berries. This I recalled in after years, for we became friends, and when I was grown he praised me with the same words, and would have made me his wife.

With what interest I looked at everything! I had never seen any rich people before. The principal house was of brick, and seemed to have stood a great while, for the green moss had crept all over the walls, and the wood-work was fallen partly to decay. This part of the building was low, and long, and narrow; the chimneys were square and large; and at the windows hung close shutters, which were of a black ashen color, the natural hue of the wood so long exposed to the storm and sunshine, and they were so heavy as to have lost their shape, and taken that of diamonds, so that they could not be shut. The earth appeared to have grown about the house, for on opening the door there was a descent of one or two steps to the level floor, and the room had such an air, smelling of damp and mold, as might have greeted us on entering a cellar.

The furniture was homely enough. An old-fashioned clock, which reached from the floor to

the ceiling, a bureau and table, both covered with white diaper linen, some unpainted chairs, with bottoms of fine split wood, I think were the chief articles. The wall had never been plastered, but it was nicely whitewashed, and the floor was without a carpet. On the hearth stood an old washing-tub, filled with earth, in which grew a thrifty orange tree, tall as I was then, and I thought it the crowning attraction of the place. A cucumber vine grew by its side, trained over its boughs, and with the young fruit dropping in curious little bottles, to produce unnatural forms—a device, as I learned afterward, of John Dale, the plow-boy, as was also a curiously made bird-house, on the top of a pole planted before the door, and higher than the dreary mansion itself.

I had ample time for observation, as I was left alone while my mother went to the adjoining room to see our sick relation, Aunt Elizabeth, as I was taught to call her. I could hear the voices of people talking, but not distinctly, and I longed very much to examine the young cucumbers; but I feared to leave my seat, and could only amuse myself by looking at the clock, and listening to the dozen round-backed guinea-fowls, that kept up an incessant noise. At last, with my cheek resting on one arm, I fell asleep, and did not wake till a tap on the window-pane, by which I sat, aroused me,

and a strange voice said,—"Is this the little girl that helped me plow?"

I was awake in an instant. The face was all radiant with joy, and I caught something of the spirit that illumined it.

No introduction was necessary; the window did not divide us long; I was shown not only the bottled cucumbers and the bird-house, but the various kinds of fowls, and beautiful rabbits, beside many other things that were curious, because new. The rear portion of the house was of logs, with a chimney of stones on the outside, against which some baskets, filled with straw, were hung for hens' nests. These I visited with my new acquaintance, and had my apron filled with eggs, which were carried in for dinner.

The kitchen was sunken farther in the ground than the other portion of the house, so that the rain-water which had fallen a day or two previously stood over the floor to the depth of an inch or more, and the fire was kept, therefore, and the meals prepared, in a shed, screened from the sun by branches of adjacent trees.

Within this summer kitchen, Squire Davids, my aunt's husband, when I first saw him, sat mending a pair of old shoes, and tending potatoes that were roasting in the hot ashes, covered over with coals. He was a large man, with florid complexion, and

almost entirely bald, having only a thin fringe of white hair falling on his neck and forehead, while the rest of his head was bare, and seemed hard and polished, like a shining stone.

He had been once or twice in the Legislature, in consequence of his early settlement in the country, I believe, and he was much esteemed for wisdom, not only by his wife, who was in the habit of saying that he had a wonderful gift of argument, but by all the people of the neighborhood.

He was by every body regarded as a good man, without a question as to his particular theology; he was sent for to visit the sick, to talk with and pray for them, and, if need were, to write their wills; and he knew something of the human system, and the diseases to which it is subject, and so compounded excellent medicines of roots and herbs, which some, whom they had benefited, thought infallible for any manner of complaint, and often affirmed that they never could desire a better doctor, or knew of one to whom a skill in physic was so natural.

He was exceedingly industrious, and all his life accomplished himself the chief business of his farm, until about the period of my visit, when his various more public duties drew so largely on his time that he consented to employ a boy as his assistant—a man was not to be thought of. And of even this

unworthy innovation, he often spoke as if he were ashamed.

He took me on his knee, while my mother was preparing the table for dinner, and made many inquiries concerning my industrial habits and abilities, to my no small discomfiture, for I could but confess that I was ignorant to an extent that shocked him. "Why, Elsie, my little daughter," he said, "your mother will quite ruin you."

He then asked me my age, and, on my replying that I was almost eight years old, he hastily put me down, and looked at me with a real or affected astonishment that brought tears to my eyes.

"No, no," he said directly, "this will never do: a nice looking little girl, almost eight years old, almost a woman, and not know how to milk a cow, nor sweep the house! Elsie will have to come and live with her aunt Elizabeth and uncle David, and learn how to make bread, and puddings, and be a woman."

He then smoothed my curls—the pretty curls my mother had made—all away from my forehead, and, after plaiting them, tied them in a sort of knot on my head, with one of the waxed strings with which he had been mending the shoe. After this, he told me that I must have a comb, and *do up my hair* like a lady—that only babies let curls fall about their faces. I was mortified, and wished I

had staid at home, especially when he told me of a dozen girls he knew, none of them so old, and all so much superior to me. One had made a quilt containing a thousand pieces, another could bake in the brick oven, and another had made her father a shirt as well as anybody except in the stitching and the button-holes.

It seemed that dinner would never be ready and interrupt this conversation; but it was, at last, and as he seated me at the table he inquired of me if I never thought I ought to earn my bread before I ate it.

I had never thought of any such thing, and I felt so badly that presently I went from the table, and resuming my old seat, counted the broken panes of glass in the windows. After a little while I was taken to see my aunt, and the old man repeated in my hearing all my indolence and worthlessness, saying, in conclusion, "I guess we must take the child, Lizabeth, and try to make something of her." My aunt, as I afterwards found, was a kind-hearted, ignorant old woman, no less industrious than her husband, and of so frugal a disposition, even in sickness, that she would have no hired assistance, compelling the squire on such occasions, with perhaps the occasional assistance of some neighboring spinster, to be himself his housekeeper.

She was tall and dark—stooping much, either

naturally, or with years. Her dress, winter and summer, was of black flannel, with straight sleeves, and skirt inconveniently narrow; and her cap of white cambric, worn without trimming or borders, and low over the forehead, across which lay the wrinkles, as they did indeed all down her face, to the point of her sharp chin.

The lonely, homesick feeling that came to me, as I sat in the silent parlor, looking at the tall clock, and listening to the guinea-hens, as they sunned their variegated humps, was new to me, and strange, but gradually, in custom, it was forgotten or lost.

There is no life perhaps so turbulent, or filled with such momentous incidents, that its earliest glimpses of the world beyond the limits of home can be forgotten; veterans on battle fields have died exulting at the brave ascent of kites held by their childish hands; and statesmen sitting with closed eyes, in senates that have trembled at their words, have felt the approach of tears with never dying memories of a mother's praise at their first triumphs in the school room. I have no power to tell you of all my life's vicissitudes since then, of the wild interblendings of heaven and hell through which I have passed, the days of smiling hope or nights of pitiless despair; but I do not know that there is any point in all my experience

to which my mind of its own accord goes back more frequently than to these scenes at the Davids' farm house.

Yet I have not lingered thus long on this first visit, so much for its own interest or importance, as because I soon after went to remain with my uncle and aunt, and that day's history became in a degree my biography for the next seven years.

CHAPTER XXI.

O drunken man! disfigured in thy face.

CHAUCER.

You do look, my son, in a moved sort.

THE TEMPEST.

To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.

ANON.

You would have but an unjust impression of that unhappy childhood of which I have already revealed to you so much—that childhood which perhaps has been remembered with tears which would not let him write my sins sometimes, by the angel who makes up the accounts between us and our Father in Heaven—if I shrunk from recording the most terrible of its scenes, which was of subsequent occurrence. When I heard you preach from that awful passage of His word which describes the worst of ages as without natural affection, you will not wonder, after reading these recitals, at my feeling that thus much of the prophecy had been fulfilled in my miserable home. If I have been too easily tempted by delusive promises of

peace—if for that life of love which is ever an object of the true soul's intensest longing, I have hazarded too much, and lost all that is most necessary to such life—remember from what storm and gloom I looked out on the shows by which I was tempted, and what temptations! I speak not in extenuation of my crime, of which there is One to judge truly, and, for the years of my repentance, very kindly; but for your just pride of your own intelligence, and for the hope I have that still you will remember me hereafter with some gentleness.

It was but a few days after that visit to my aunt which I have mentioned so particularly, that my father was brought home in a condition so frightful that there was at once despair of his life. I remember to-night, as I sit here alone by this wintry fire, shining out against the panes which shield me from the angry tempest of snow and hail—I remember the oppressing sense of fear and wonder with which I saw him conveyed to the gate of our poor house, in his own little cart, which was half filled with straw to save him as much as possible from the tortures of a removal in that terrible state. He was partly sheltered by an old broken umbrella, and his forehead was bound with a cloth red with his blood.

He scowled on me as they lifted him down, and when I went close, and asked him what was the

matter, he thrust me roughly aside, with an oath that made me tremble.

In a few moments I summoned courage to peer in at the door, and then I saw my mother almost overwhelmed in the momentary insanity of grief, wringing her hands, shrieking, and weeping; but she became more calm, and presently one of the men approached her and whispered some words to which she gave an affirmative answer, upon which he came out to me and put his large right hand upon my shoulder, saying that my father had been in a brawl, and got the worst of it, that he would die, may be, before Squire Davids could be got there, and would certainly not live more than a day or two. I joined then instinctively in the passionate sorrow of my mother, not indeed that much love was possible for one who never had evinced a feeling of humanity for me, but that all was so sudden, so strange, so terrible; and then the man said, to comfort me, that I ought not to cry for it, as I would be far better off, as well as my mother, when the last nail was in his coffin. I forgot he had not been to me as other fathers to their children whom I knew, and shuddered at a speech that even a fiend, I since have thought sometimes, should never make to a child about a father; and I pulled myself away from him—for he held me with a tight rather than a friendly grasp—and

going to my accustomed play ground, under a low cherry tree, where the grass was all trodden down, I attempted to think of other things. It was in vain, and I called the dog to me, and tried to make him play with a stick, as I had done often before, but he sullenly refused, and pressing his nose to the door-sill he piteously howled and would not be driven away.

As I sat thus weeping by myself, and at the same time attempting to draw a picture of the dog on the smooth bark of the tree, with a common pencil I had found a few days previously, a youth, who was passing in a chaise, drew up and asked me why I was crying, and who taught me to make pictures. At first I hid the lines with my apron, but he spoke so kindly and praised my skill so much that I withdrew it, and told him why I cried. I had never seen any one so handsome and well dressed as he, and I was quite astonished and delighted when he took from his pocket a small book of engravings, and a crayon, and gave them both to me, saying, "You are a little genius, and you must learn how to use them, and become an artist."

How quickly the world recognizes the creative powers of him who has been nursed in the lap of ease! how many hands reach out to aid the climbing laurel toward his brows, that never have been

browned with the hot sun as he has toiled in fields, nor furrowed with any slow shaping care, or the quick mastery of a sudden sorrow. But the entitled poor too often struggle for bays that are heaped up on the undeserving rich; they grope through obscure ways, hungry, like

Blind Orion, for the morn,

with but the cloud and dread presentiment of greatness on their souls. The soil of poverty smothers the flowers of inspiration from the world's discovery, or stifles songs that if unloosed might fill with melody a thousand years. Yet the divine faculties do not attain their best development when led by luxury among bowers and fountains, so often as when the darkest forms of wretchedness drag them in chains through deserts, and over crags, and down amid whatever is most to be feared, or hated, in human life. "Wicked Angelo must work in ceilings till he can only read with his book above his head." The roof of a prison kept the eyes of Tasso from that nature which should have fed his soul with beauty and with strength. And what immortal visions have come, Dante, to lone exiles, or, Gallileo, to those who watched the stars through windows grated with impassable iron! How many hearts are beating like death watches in the dark—passing, unknown, out of

time—whose simple experience if unfolded would draw away the eyes of the subtlest anatomists of exalted passion from the most impressive pages in all written art. Poets, the wings of whose fancy beat exultingly up through the golden clouds where my poor thoughts cannot climb, tell us of immortal amaranths shadowing the green summits of Fame's far mountain, but no such sweet repose of joy has been disclosed in any life that I have known, and if such sunshine as the children of genius seek, be found except in rifts through darkest clouds, haply it will be only in that day which will come after the last night of all.

I cannot express to you the interest with which the stranger's gifts inspired me, nor the influence which his gentle words had on my efforts and aspirations in all my succeeding years of childhood.

As I yet sat beneath the tree, turning the leaves over and over, and backward and forward, the man who had stopped to comfort me so strangely returned, in company with my uncle. Both seemed to have ridden very fast, for the nostrils and flanks of their horses were specked with foam.

"Hi, hi!" said Squire Davids, seeing me, "can you find nothing better to do?" The other person came near, and, taking from his head the blue woolen cap, which was old, and falling on one side, wiped the perspiration from his face with his

sleeve, as he asked me whether my father was ready for his shroud. He then inquired if I had seen him, and, taking me by the hand, led me in, telling my mother he had brought me to take a last look.

After a partial examination of the injuries which my father had received, Squire Davids shook his head, and a whispered consultation followed, at the conclusion of which it was announced as the general opinion that a doctor must be sent for to come from the city. This terrified me more than I had been before, for I knew that when a doctor was called from town the case was desperate. As to who was called, I think that in their judgment it made little difference, and the man in the blue cap, who seemed officious, set out presently on the important mission, saying, as he departed, "All the doctors in the world cannot set him on his feet again."

"No sir, no sir," responded one or two voices; but Squire Davids said while there was life there was hope, and the same voices said "Yes, sir, yes, sir." For myself, I remember that I felt very much encouraged, as well as afraid, for I supposed that though a regular physician was never summoned but in extremity, he could perform miracles.

"Well," said the squire to my mother, when about to depart, "whether he lives or dies, you will

have your hands full; yes, whether he lives or dies, you will have your hands full: so just get this little girl ready, (here he laid his hand on my head) and I'll take her home with me."

With some tears—whether for me or for the wretched state of things about her, I do not know—the dress which had been my grandmother's, with some other rudely made garments, constituting all my wardrobe, were tied in a handkerchief which my mother took from her neck, and which was, I believe, all the one she had; and then, mounted behind the old man, I was carried away, and sold, as it were, into bondage.

I am sure I need not describe to you the life I led at the house of my uncle. During the seven years of my service, I saw my mother but once: I was well provided for, she thought, and she was satisfied.

Through every winter season I was sent to school, where the books I used were those my uncle himself had used when a boy, and I learned little from them. But my teacher had seen something of the world, and he taught in this obscure and lonely place, a part of the time, to enable him to struggle upward for the rest. He received only a pitiful compensation, but the three richest men of the district gave him board and lodging, and, with an old trunk, and a bundle of books, he moved from place

to place. Our house was, of course, one of his homes; and from his conversation and reading I learned more than I did at school.

In the summer, I was often required to gain time from my household routine for the performance of extra tasks, such as dropping corn, and other duties in the field. Sometimes John Dale and I rested together in the shade, and, so long as we talked of our work, of how soon we should get the seed in, and how soon it would be up, and of the scarecrow we should make of Aunt Elizabeth's plaid cloak and the Squire's bell-crowned hat, we preserved the most perfect unity of feeling. But when I told some story learned of the schoolmaster, or exhibited the new drawing I had made, the sympathy was ended. So, as I grew older, there was accumulated in my mind a world of thoughts and emotions of which he had no knowledge. He was always very kind to me, constructed swings for me, and brought to me frequently the fairest apples and the ripest berries—so I could not choose but love him—and yet I preferred often to be alone. And when the schoolmaster was with us, I sat on a low stool by his side, with my knitting, (for I was never suffered to be idle) and listened all the while he read or talked to me, leaving John to decide upon the color of the new cart, and the best time of the moon for planting potatoes, according to the tradi-

tions he had received from the old farmers of the neighborhood.

The schoolmaster praised my drawings, too, and all the summer, as lamb, or cow, or tree, took natural shape beneath my pencil, I pleased myself with anticipations of the surprise and pleasure he would feel in my improvement. Nobody could understand me so well as he, and the long winter evenings seemed too short, when I sat in the blaze of the heaped wood-fires with him. If he praised me, I could not sleep all the night, but vague and strange yearnings, that I can now better define, alternately uplifted and cast me down.

I could see, in the starlight, visions of pictures, glorious embodiments of all beautiful things of which I had ever dreamed, and on the wind I could hear murmurs of praise.

I would think, "I am mocked with laurels hung above my reach; I have no power to climb; and no hand will reach downward to help me up: it were better to shut my eyes, and sink to the level of circumstances." And I would say sometimes, "John is soundly asleep, acquiring strength for the tasks of to-morrow—no waking visions haunt his pillow." But turn as I would to the real life before me, there was another life outside the narrow continent of being to which my experience was limited, where, in spite of the actual and the probable,

irresistible influences compelled me to walk, and I woke, after fitful and brief slumbers, with flushed cheeks and a throbbing bosom, for which John's honest pity, and my aunt's wholesome exercise in the dairy, were no palliatives.

So the years came and went, and came and went again; and childish fancies were lost in a no less dreamy girlhood. I need not describe the little phases of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, compassed by the same dull round, and ending in the same hopeless endurance. I needed not indeed to relate to you all that I here have written, but I cannot help but think that this various and humble experience was a preparation for the fate to which I am sorrowfully approaching; and if I could linger long enough to unfold to you the hard privation, and helpless ambition, that made up the history of my childhood, you might at least, sometimes, turn from the melancholy results to the molding influences, and the media through which you see would possibly present a softened shade.

My fifteenth birth-day was passed, and John called me still a pretty girl. Neither tasks with my needle, nor field nor household toil, had done me much wrong in his opinion; and my little brown hands were none the less pretty that they were brown, nor my cheeks less lovely that their crimson blushed not out of snow. Wan and faded as I am,

I can hardly trace my lineaments in the healthful and rustic girl I was then. One day, when the schoolmaster had just gone from us, and a wretched and helpless feeling oppressed me, my uncle came home with a letter for me—the first I ever received. I had seen some two or three letters, perhaps, that were sent at long intervals to Squire Davids, with superscriptions in hieroglyphics covering the entire surface, but an epistle neatly folded, and directed in a hand that seemed to me the perfection of writing, I now saw for the first time. A new world seemed opening as I broke the seal and read the mysterious communication.

By the death of a relation, my mother was become heir to a decent competence, and I was henceforth to live with her, in a pretty cottage not fifty miles from the great city of which I had dreamed ever since I was a little child. I was lost in incredulous surprise for a time, but even before the preparations for my departure were completed, my first enthusiasm was gone. I was to leave the roof-tree and the hearth-light that had sheltered and warmed me for years, and I knew not what I should obtain. Contending emotions filled my heart. The bird that flies against his prison bars will sometimes refuse freedom itself, when the cage is open, and such a feeling was mine. I knew not till then, how endeared to me were the old home-

stead, and even the dumb brutes with whose aspects I had become familiar.

It was a mild evening in April, and the trees had scarcely leaves enough for shadows yet, when I left the house to visit for the last time, probably, the adjacent places I had loved the most. I had turned from the grass bank where I had read sometimes, and taken in my arms the young trees I had tried to imitate in my poor drawings, and was returning homeward, with my heart's sorrow dimming my eyes, when, a little aside from my path, sitting on a harrow sunken in the edge of a plowed field, I saw John Dale. His attitude evinced his sudden grief, and with an air of abandonment he buried his face in his hands.

"Come, John," I said, approaching him, and affecting not to see his sorrow, "I am going home now—won't you go with me?" He was startled, for he had not seen me; but there came to his cheek no flush of shame, and with a look half beseeching and half reproachful he remained silent. I could not go on, and after a moment's hesitation I sat down beside him on the harrow. I tried to talk of the sunset, of the budding trees, and all the common things that had previously interested him. With his hard and sun-burned hand he wiped the tears from his eyes and listened, but he did not smile, nor seem aware of his work, as with a small

stick he loosened from one tooth of the harrow the moist earth.

At last I persuaded him into some conversation of the farm he had bought, and was working to pay for; but the attraction it had for him was connected with me, and as I did not wish to discourage, and thereby wound him, and could not give him any hope, our words were formal, and unsatisfactory to both, and we went homeward in silence. "What have I done? where am I to go?" were my thoughts on waking in the morning; but, looking from the window, I saw the new cart, which John had painted, waiting to carry me away.

CHAPTER XXII.

High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.

SHAKESPEARE.

Playful she turned that he might see

The passing smile her cheek put on,

But when she marked how mournfully

His eyes met hers, that smile was gone.

LALLA ROOKE.

IN these seven years of her widowhood circumstances had been fortunate for my mother. With more happy associations and less oppressing cares, the natural gentleness of her disposition had been restored, and sweet affections which a miserable life had blighted, blossomed again in modest beauty, making her in a humble sphere and limited circle an object of the kindest regard, so that all who knew her had been pleased with her accession to the little competence which led to our reunion. In our pleasant cottage a new and happy life opened upon me, as the fairest morning in gardens of flowers, to one who has wandered all night in deserts.

Though I had received but such education as is bestowed in the common schools in rural districts,

yet in the winter quarter of each year I had been an industrious and quick learner, and had generally been first in my class and in the praises of my teachers. And I had cultivated as much as possible, though always without any suitable instructor, my taste for drawing. The little sketches I sometimes made with crayons or common water colors were very rude indeed, but I was proud of them, and always fancied, perhaps truly, that the last one was the best of all I had made. In every way the discipline of character and habit at my uncle's had been advantageous to me, and I was now happy in the conviction of my mother—that I surpassed in all accomplishments as in beauty any young girl with whom I was likely to associate.

But new changes were before me. One afternoon as I sat by the window of our little parlor, I was startled by some disturbance in the street, and in a moment a gentleman who had been thrown from his carriage was brought into the house. He was not seriously injured, but in the opinion of the physician who was summoned, it was necessary that he should remain a few days in repose, and as I with book or pencil sat frequently in the room where he reclined on a sofa, we became acquainted, and a feeling of such interest succeeded as I had never felt for any one I knew.

I had never, in truth, previously known a gen-

tleman of education and the manners which belong to a polished society, and my poorly educated fancy had never an ideal to be compared with Mr. Warburton. His conversation was all freshness and beauty to me, and he was studiously kind, as if delighted that he had power to communicate to any one a pleasure. I listened with more rapt attention than the fair Venetian long ago. He saw my attempts at drawing, praised them, and said that with such genius as I possessed but cultivation was necessary to a great excellence in art, and in a mood half serious and half earnest he became for the time my instructor, unfolding to me those fundamental principles which a taste for sketching had made familiar to himself when a youth, though he confessed a long neglect of a pursuit in which a love of nature once had made him an enthusiast.

One day as I was exhibiting to him my first rude pictures, I related the chance by which I had become aware of the possession of any natural talent of this kind—the stranger's notice of me, his kindness, and its influence on my happiness and efforts. He heard me with attention, growing into earnestness, and when I had concluded, exclaimed, "Oh, I have then to congratulate myself on having been your discoverer, as well as teacher!" Suddenly the bond of our union was drawn closer—we were old friends. I need not enter into de-

tails. From what I have said you may readily conceive of his handsome person, intellectual endowments, and persuasive eloquence; and of my ambition, trustfulness, and simple faith. Why should I linger on such scènes—why tell you the results your thought anticipates? We parted lovers, and in truth

“My star stood still before him.”

His love—for I still believe he loved me—was not the all-absorbing passion which was in my heart. Ambition was mixed with his tenderest devotion. His partiality led him to exaggerate my talents, which he believed would ultimately add new luster to the fame he was determined himself to achieve. I was never for a moment, something to shelter, to protect—a solace for sorrow or joy of softer and less ambitious moods—but through the very bridal veil the iron purpose he formed stood hard and unyielding before me. No paradise of sweet repose tempted me, but study and toil, with certainty of disappointed hopes, and the constant goading of a task-master who would hear of no pain, nor weariness, nor faltering, nor see anything but the possible triumph. But when he swept from the hard and steep way the soft mists of fancy, and taking my hand, said, “Are you strong enough? and brave enough? have you

sufficient faith in yourself and in me?" I went forward with a courage equal to his will; and so long as his arm was about me, and his voice whispering inducements and confidence, no labor or sacrifice was greater than I could dare.

"He will never marry you," said my mother; "I wish you had never seen him. Throw away your idle fancies, and become the happy wife of John Dale." But opposition strengthened my devotion to him, and when forbidden to see each other any more, we met clandestinely, and the fruits of my disobedience were such abandonment of my very soul to him as Heaven has ever visited with shame and misery.

Night after night I sat in the accustomed bower, waiting for his promised footsteps, with my heart beating, down from the wildness of expectancy to the stillness of distracting fear, as the hours deepened and darkened, and my mysterious lover did not come. At last this agony of suspense could be endured no longer, and under false pretexts I left my home, and sought, alone and friendless, in the strange great city, my promised husband.

At a time and place most unfortunate, I presented myself before him, and claimed the fulfilment of his vows.

Need I say how I appeared—a rustic girl, without the beauty joy and hope can give the commonest

expression, and without the grace which the most untutored may possess with innocence and content, thus intruding into the midst of, refinement and elegance?

“Who is she, and what does she want?” whispered one to another; for Mr. Warburton had given me but a cold recognition, without an intimation as to the claims I had upon his affection and justice, and I saw the angry spot burning in his cheek as he gracefully made his adieus, and as hastily as possible drew me away. What an ordeal awaited me! Shame, confusion, self-reproach, utter despair, and, over all, the cold cruelty, the calm decision, the unconcealed anger and probable abandonment of him for whom I had bartered every hope that had been mine, for honor, life, or eternity.

I was dumb before him, went whithersoever he led, and to all his harsh reproaches answered not a word. At length with wonderful adroitness he assumed to be the injured party, and talked of ruin my thoughtless imprudence would bring upon us both. “Marriage, just now,” he said, “is impossible. You must content yourself with such a home as I think proper or have power to give you, for a while, and, meantime, I will be with you as much as is consistent with my duties; I will aid you in your studies, and you will have all my love. Have

you bravery and faith enough to work, and wait till it is possible to fulfil the promises I made you, and have ever held to be sacred obligations? If you say yes, dear Elsie, I shall for your courage and endurance hold you doubly dear. If you say no, I abandon you at once and forever to the doom you court, and give you but my hatred and my curse."

"For your love, Nathan," I said, "I can brave all things. I can wait, and work, and hope. But when shall we be married?"

"I do not know," he answered; "but as soon as it is possible. The future, however, is not what you are to think of now. You must bend all your energies to the development of your genius. Feeling can be crushed easily enough—with only an effort of the will."

We had gone through various windings and intricate ways, and stopped, at length, before a dilapidated building, some four or five stories in height, in an obscure and narrow street, and here, for the present, was to be my home. I ascended the steep and dirty stairs, pair after pair, and was shewn, at last, to a small and cheaply furnished apartment, in the fourth story, where, I was told, I must make myself contented and happy.

As the door closed, or was about closing upon my prison, I could no longer keep the tears from

my eyes, or suppress the sound of my emotion. "Wait," I said, imploringly, reaching out my arms, "Oh! wait, and reassure me! My head and heart are breaking, and I am afraid to be here alone."

"I have said all I can say, given you every assurance of love and protection that a reasonable woman could ask, and, unless you wish to forfeit all claims upon me, refrain from such foolish and ill-timed appeals. Good night."

"Oh, have mercy! pity me!" I exclaimed. I could not help it. He turned toward me, for a moment, and with a look that seemed crushing me into perdition, folded his arms, and saying, simply, "Well!" he descended the stairs without another word.

The agony I endured that night may never be written.

When the morning came, and I went to the window, I found that instead of looking into the street as I expected, the prospect was completely shut in by high brick walls, with only a plat of ground a few yards in extent for the eye to rest on, and that beaten, heated, cracked open, and entirely destitute of grass or flowers. This, then, was to be my home! I soon discovered that I was in one of the most crowded and in all ways least endurable of the common boarding houses of New York.

I cannot describe it, nor my sufferings while I remained in it, a helpless and hopeless stranger, among persons with whom I could not wish to be acquainted. Only one gleam of sunshine ever illumined the place, and that was in the kind words and cheerful smile of a grocer—an awkward young man, but good and amiable, who lived there, and had kindly assisted me to find Mr. Warburton, on my arrival in town.

I was constantly tortured with the fear of desertion, and sometimes the days came and went and the long nights wore by without his coming, for whose sake only I endured existence.

And when he made his unfrequent visits, and my heart leapt joyously to meet him, he would perhaps simply inquire what I had accomplished, examine my work critically, and if it were good say I must make it better, and if it chanced to displease him, tear it or trample it beneath his feet, and without a word of endearment, or a promise of brighter days, leave me to the awful solitude of my thoughts. Sometimes I prayed to die; sometimes I cried out, like a child that is lost in a wilderness, and sometimes, with my hands dropping listlessly beside me, I sat through the day and night in silent and dumb despair. At other times I took courage—Heaven knows whence it came—and wrought earnestly and hopefully, till physical

weariness, or the old fear, brought back again despair and the prostration of all my faculties.

I must have died, but for some occasional kindnesses, giving me gleams of hope. How grateful I was for them, and how long I lived on their memory! Is it a wonder if, under such circumstances, my progress in my difficult art was slow? and, as the ambition once connected with me began to decay, if his love rapidly declined, and soon was ended.

The history of this wretched prison would fill a volume, if I had time to write it. How vividly it all rises in memory—all that I saw and felt there. There was dark panel work at the head and the foot of the bed, by which I used to sit, and, on the smooth surfaces, trace characters with my finger—sometimes my own name, sometimes Mr. Warburton's—and records of sin and suffering, fearful death-beds, and terrible judgments. What pages I have thus traced, to give shape or solace to my sorrow. But all that mournful writing left no impression on the blank panels, where the same story was repeated over and over a thousand times.

The dusty cobwebs seemed to have hung for ages along the ceiling, and to have filled the corners of the room with gossamer shelves, that were

sunken with the white wings of the candle-moth, and the bodies of flies, dry as mummies. The colors in the tattered carpet had been worn into a red and muddy hue; the chairs seemed to have been brought there because too much decayed or broken to be retained in the more public rooms, pegs in the wall served instead of a wardrobe, and the other furniture consisted of a small table, painted red, and streaked and dotted with yellow, and a stand, of a bluish stone color, on which was a bowl and a tall pitcher, with the spout and handle broken. Add to these a green rocking-chair, with yellow flowers painted on the slats of the back, and so disordered with age or careless use as scarcely to be occupied with safety, and you have a perfect inventory of the room's contents.

Notwithstanding its unpromising aspect I often pleased myself with fancies that, for so little, this might be mended and that renewed, till all should be comfortable and pretty, and then how happy we could be, even there! he whom I loved so well, and I. But these visions, so bright to me, were never a spell for him, and I dared not even whisper them, since to him the impolitic was the impossible. What would the people among whom he was accustomed to move, say to his union with me, and the abandonment of his elegant lodgings for a humbler home to be shared with such a wife? In

such a prospect he would have seen the forfeiture of his long sought and hardly earned position.

I made a thousand plans that seemed feasible, till I unfolded them to him. "Do you not see, dear Elsie," he would say, "how utterly impossible it is? Employ your mind with your pictures, just now. I hope a brighter destiny awaits you. If I should not live to see it—when my poor name is forgotten, your's will be famous. Work, dear Elsie, work, and wait a little longer."

Often, as he spoke thus, tears were in his eyes, and there was a pathos and tremulous gentleness in his voice that indicated the sincerity of his trust in my abilities, and the fear of some dark and premature ending of his own career; which foreknowledge, as it now seems to have been, stood ever like some haunting phantom between him and the light. While he spoke of my prospective triumphs he felt always the presence of this prophetic shadow over him; and, forgetting the miserable realities in which I was already involved—I, who needed strength and comfort so much, became his strengthener and comforter. While he was with me, and speaking kindly and hopefully, I forgot all the past, and all the future; for in the blindness of her own devotion, woman rests satisfied, so long as she is not cast into outer darkness. Good—she knows not, suspects not how—will at some indefinite

time—she thinks not when—be the result of ill ;
and so, with the darkest present closing about her,
she remains unconscious, incredulous, and, under
the close arching of the sepulcher, reaching for
roses on the wall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I have possessed your grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond.

SHAKESPEARE.

O hateful, hellish snake! what Furie first
Brought thee from hateful house of Proserpine.

SPENSER.

A THING of wonderful strength, and of strange and fearful mystery, is woman's love. I was strictly forbidden by Warburton to go from the house, and you may fancy how weary I grew of myself as the sun came up, and climbed, slowly, higher and higher, and then faded, and went down, and the moon came and went among the stars, now shining in full splendor that seemed to mock me, and now shrinking to a thin and pallid ghost, that saddened me no less. You most know, indeed, how little there was to interest me, outside of myself, and how dreary and desolate grew the world within.

Three times a day I went down the narrow and

dark stairs, to the room in which the boarders assembled for their meals, which was low, and so dim, having but one window, and that opening on an alley, that the two gas-burners—unornamented, angular, and seeming to be driven in the ceiling toward either end of the table—were always lighted even in the summer noon. Here I saw men and women, evidently belonging to the poorest, if not to the meanest grades of society. Women, whose occupation was washing and house-cleaning; reduced seamstresses, who could afford no better place; men, who did all sorts of work and drudgery, with now and then a fellow of more wit and less honesty whose means of living even in so miserable a way were a mystery. Two organ-grinders there were, whose monkeys regaled themselves on bits of stale bread and the rinds of cheese, in the yard of which I have spoken, while their masters fared little more luxuriously inside the house.

The grocer to whom I have referred, and whom they called John, was the most pleasing, intelligent, and gentlemanly person among them all. His place at the table was opposite mine, and as he was very talkative I could not without seeming uncivil avoid conversation with him at times, for he was exceedingly polite to me, offering always the first service of whatever was on the table, and sometimes bringing me flowers, which he delighted in

cultivating, and at other times cakes or candy, from his grocery, with a boyish kindness that won upon me, because so few were kind to me there, and because I knew it was a display of genuine feeling.

In the common books—such as were sold in paper covers—and general affairs of the day, he was at home; and, somewhere in his nature, which was for the most part coarse, and laughably eccentric, there was a vein of refinement.

A day or two after I was conducted to this house I was requested to go down to the parlor for an interview with my host. He was a bluff and surly looking man, having but one eye, and with hair stiff and white as bristles, and teeth black and broken.

“I suppose, Miss, or Mrs., or whatever”—he said, fixing his eye on me, “you know it’s our custom, when we take in strangers, to ask payment in advance.” I was silent, for I had thought nothing about it; and he continued, “If you don’t know it, ’t is so, and maybe it ’s just as convenient for you to make us safe now as any time. Nice airy room, you have, and everything in the first style; and what’s more, no questions asked, and that’s no ways disagreeable, I reckon;” at the close of which speech he winked and leered with an expression both insinuating and offensive.

"I must implore your patience for a day or two," I said, "till I can communicate with my friend"—

"Communicate with the devil," he said, interrupting me, and rising and approaching he extended his fore finger almost to my face, as he continued, "Mind you, I have given you fair warning, and if the dollars are not in my hand to-morrow night, you go out of this place without ceremony. Devilish pretty box we'd get ourselves in, keeping the like of you for nothing. It wouldn't take more nor a gust of wind to blow you over; and then there's a coffin, and some kind of a burying to be paid for. Do you mind that, young woman?"

I was paralyzed—dumb with the consciousness that I was indeed liable to such coarse and harsh treatment, and that I was powerless to defend myself in any way.

When he reached the door, he turned, and with an air and manner of mock gravity said, "you had best make it convenient, my dear madam, to communicate, as soon as possible, with that friend o' yours;" and with the flourish of a hand that seemed never to have been washed, unless in the gutters, he disappeared.

In my terror and mortification, I had not noticed that the grocer sat by the table reading, or seeming to read, till the importunate host was gone, when,

throwing down his paper, he told me not to mind the old sinner, and offered to loan me money, if I required, saying, by way of making me confident of his ability, that he had two doubloons in his pocket.

My eyes had been tearless till he spoke. I thought the fountain was dry ; but with this display of kindness, the blinding flood was loosened and I could not give expression in words to the gratitude I felt.

Stumbling near my own door, I heard a smothered groan from an adjoining room ; and, pausing to listen, it was repeated again and again. The door was slightly ajar, and wiping my eyes, I tapped lightly, wondering whether there could be any greater suffering in the world than mine. "Come in," said a shrill voice, and I entered. The apartment was furnished even more meanly and meagerly than mine, and was occupied, at the time, by two women—one an invalid, in the last stage of consumption, as appeared from her perpetual cough and the sickening transparency of her forehead and hands.

She smiled as I entered, and motioned me to a seat near her cot-bed, the pillow of which seemed much too low, and the clothing too scanty—consisting of a dirty blanket and a ragged blue quilt, that would not cover both feet and hands at the

same time. Her complexion was a pale straw color, her lips a pinkish blue, and her eyes glitteringly bright.

"Are you in great pain?" I asked, for she seemed in intense suffering.

"No," she answered faintly, "but I am dying for air, and they won't give it to me. For mercy's sake, open the window," and she seemed gasping for breath as she spoke.

The ceiling was low, the window closed with a blanket curtain, to prevent the admission of a breath of air, and the stove was at a glowing heat.

As I lifted the window a woman who had been sitting near the fire drew me away and closed it again, saying, in a whisper, "She don't know what she wants; she's crazy." In vain the sick woman insisted on having air; her attendant refused, and, by way of diverting her thoughts, I suppose, took from the mantle a torn and dirty pack of cards, and having presented them at the bedside to be cut, seated herself near by on the floor and began telling the fortune of the poor creature who, lulled into listening, presently fell asleep.

"Now," said the fortune-teller, presenting them for me to cut, "I'll tell yours." After dealing them off, she shook her head, saying she didn't like to tell me all she saw, for she was sure I would not be so happy for having heard it. All my super-

stitious fears were roused, and as I left the suffocating room I thought nothing could add to my wretchedness; but, slipped beneath my own door, I found a note, which Mr. Warburton had left for me, having chanced to call in my absence. My heart sank within me, when I discovered that he had been there and was gone. With a trembling hand I unfolded and read what he had written:

"It seems, Elsie, you have found better friends than I. Very well. I shall not trouble you till you are willing to see me."

Imagine, if it be possible, what were my emotions. The incidents which I have related here are but examples of my suffering. The life I led was one endurable to a common nature only when repelled from another existence by mysterious and awful fears of immortal retribution for sin.

Perhaps he will return again, I thought; surely pity will prompt him to return when he remembers what I must suffer. There was no ground for his fancy that I had left the house; in a calmer moment he will feel how foolish and unreasonable it is to be angry without cause, and feeling this he will come back; Oh, I am sure he will come! And so I arose and looked at the sun sloping westward over the gray house-tops—there were yet some hours before night, and counting and recounting the probabilities of his being in the neighborhood, I stood

at the window till the last slant sunbeams drew themselves away from the highest roofs and towers that I could see. My God! what a sickening and sinking of the heart I experienced—what an atmosphere of agony weighed me down—as the light of promise darkened from the horizon of hope. The murmur of the life about me was like the flowing of the sea-waves, mournful to hear; and I sorrowfully recounted all the bright ventures I had seen go down.

There may be circumstances in which we find a sort of pleasure in exaggerating the wrongs and afflictions we have suffered, but this is in the crescent phase of sorrow, not when it is at the full, for then there can be no exaggeration, and the recounting of evils is like crowning the aching and bleeding forehead with thorns. Now and then I heard an approaching step and my heart ceased to beat—it came nearer and nearer, and I was irresistibly drawn toward the sound, and my arms involuntarily reached themselves out—thought touched the summit of desire—hope, stretched to its utmost tension, snapped, and that swimming and choking sensation came over me which he feels beneath whose feet the scaffolding is giving way. At times it seemed to me that I must fly—

“Anywhere, anywhere out of the world”—

and as a demon might howl against the barriers of his hell, my heart, maddened with remorseful agony, cried for the light from which it was shut away; for all the bitter anguish under which mortality ever groaned seemed gathering into those few moments, and I felt struck apart alike from the peace of death and the rest of life. Talk of sorrow—there is no sorrow like that she feels who sees the love fading out, for the brief beauty of which she has defied the red shadows of the pit; the stony pillow of the prison is softer than hers; the rack is as a bed of roses compared with the shameful torment upon which her soul is stretched. In vain for her the arch fiend uncloses his dark cavern and shows her the serpents and the chains; she well knows there is nothing more that they can do.

So the dull twilight came down, and as I heard the lifting of the sash in the sick chamber which was next to mine, the demons for a moment stood back. I hurried to the bedside; thank God! they had given her air at last, and a smile played over the torture of her working lips, as the fresh breeze fanned for a moment the expiring flame of life; but the eyes looked reproaches even beneath their fluttering lids, and till the features were set. A sudden wave of exultation bore me up when I saw that she was dead, and having put my hand on the

clammy temple, and the feet—stiffening beneath the ragged covering that had always till then been too scanty—that assurance might be perfect, I went away from the shape of untroubled dust, half regretful that I was not myself the victim in that terrible conflict and defeat. When I was alone, all that night, I thought of the calm close that comes over the stormiest life so soon, and the grave, that has been so often called cruel, seemed to me kinder than the cradle, for I narrowed my thoughts from the infinite doubt and mystery beyond.

The leaden moments lengthened into dreary hours, the hours into dim days, and the days into darker nights; and as the time drew on when the torture must at least be changed, I could scarcely forbear a supplication that it might prove mortal, before to unoffending innocence my sin should bring the suffering and shame from which there could be no possible escape. How could I hear that worse than orphaned cry, and live! Yet when I weighed the probable chances, and saw in fancy the shadow of the nameless being wound almost at my feet, the weakness of our nature was more and more felt, and the uncertain sunshine brightened as it receded.

The crisis was nearly come, and my turbulent thoughts had drifted into that strait which is neither hope nor fear, when he from whom I had

almost reconciled myself to be separated once more came to me.

His tears fell against my face as he bent over my pillow, and up from the fountain in which days of estrangement had choked it, came the old warmth and tenderness of my love. And with his kisses yet fresh on my lips I said, "Stay, Nathan, oh, do not leave me *now*; to-night, only to-night—I shall perhaps never have another favor to ask of you—I hope I shall not—but I want your love to be about me at the last—I want my eyes as I sink into the darkness to rest on you, for with all the fervor of my first devotion I love you now. Say at least you will stay near me, and if we must part, let me be the first to go—you know, dear love, I will never come back to trouble you any more."

"Do not, gentlest and best of all women," he said, as seating himself beside me he took my hands in his, "do not ask impossibilities—I will pray for you, dear wife—I, who dare not pray for myself any more, will pray for you." Then after rallying me on my childish fears, the expression of which he continually interrupted with assurances of love and fidelity, he took from his pocket-book some blank paper and a pencil and sat for a moment, silent and hesitating.

Presently, in a manner which he meant to be

careless and playful, he said, "How old are you, Elsie?"

Afterward he asked many circumstances of my childhood and early life—all with special reference, as I knew, to the probability that this was the last opportunity he could ever have of ascertaining these particulars, which an undefinable feeling in his heart made him anxious to possess. Nevertheless I answered calmly and definitely till all was done, and then said simply, "Why have you made such inquiries?"

"One of these days, dear wife," he replied, "when you are well, and we are living happily together, I intend to write a romance, and make you its heroine."

When I was dead he would have written me a fine epitaph.

In my heart, there is one book which human eyes have never looked upon. I have "closed it, and clasped it with a clasp," even from my own eyes. Help me, Oh God! to live a life that shall plead for me in that day when it shall be opened!

* * * * *

As I sat one evening in the broad moonlight that streamed through my naked window, there

was a light tap at my door, and on opening it the curious youth, of whom I have before spoken, stood there, holding in his hand a string of red beads. "Here, Hagar," he said, (for he never called me Elsie,) "is a present for the baby;" and before I could thank him he was gone.

They were the first gift the unconscious innocent ever received, and as I clasped them on her snowy neck, and rocked the little one to and fro, with no rebuking eyes upon me, I felt something of a mother's pride—almost a gleam of happiness.

Any intercourse between the young grocer and myself had been forbidden by Mr. Warburton, on the pretext that his ill-breeding and inferior social position rendered him an unfit companion for me. And indeed I neither sought nor desired his intimate companionship, but could not help feeling very grateful for kind acts, and even for looks that did not say, "I despise you."

Tearing a blank leaf from a letter I had just received from Mr. Warburton, I wrote a few lines of grateful acknowledgment to the young man, folded, superscribed, and threw them on the table, to be handed to him in the morning.

I had scarcely done so when a shadow darkened the moonlight, and, turning, I saw before me the father of my child.

"Dear Elsie," he said, taking my hand with the

tenderest solemnity, "to-morrow we shall be married, if, indeed, the love you once bore me has not been changed into hatred. I am ambitious and proud, my dear wife, and therefore have seemed cold, cruel even, sometimes, perhaps, but all the time you were dear to me, dearer than all in the world, dearer than any words can tell; and from this time you have, if you can forgive me and love me yet, the protection of a husband, as well as the devotion of a lover. The world shall know and honor you as my wife, dear Elsie."

The kisses, the fond interchanges of assurance, the calm, rather than tumultuous happiness, I need not attempt to describe. The picture of this scene could be interesting only to lovers. All men have generous moods and right impulses sometimes, and Mr. Warburton had his, and these were of them.

As he clasped our sleeping infant in his arms, its face wet with a baptism of repentant and loving tears, I sitting by his side, and the moonlight covering us both, I never felt so sober an assurance of bliss. I cared not to speak, lest I should break the spell, and, leaning upon a sure hope, I fell asleep.

When I awoke, it was to feel the final ruin of all my mortal happiness. The room was cold and empty. My promised husband, and my beautiful and innocent child, were gone, and forever.

Unfolded in my lap lay the note I had written, and beside it the torn letter. There was no word of explanation—none was needed—I saw, and felt all.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Existence may be borne, and the deep root
Of life and sufferance makes its firm abode
In bare and desolate bosoms : mute
The camel labors with the heaviest load,
And the wolf dies in silence. Not bestowed
In vain should such example be ; if they,
Things of ignoble or of savage mood
Endure and shrink not, we of nobler clay
May temper it to bear—it is but for a day.

BYRON.

GRADUALLY I recovered from the mental and physical prostration in which he left me. But whither should I go ? what should I do ? I could not return to the home I had dishonored and deserted, and ask the recognition and affection of friends and kindred I had thus abandoned. Though my mother was pining for me day and night, I could not go back to her, so changed, and with the confession of his sins, whom I had so praised and trusted in, against her will. I knew not what to do ; all was blank, dark, impenetrable night. But at length I roused myself to action. The letters which had given me so intense a happiness, the

sketches and paintings on which I had toiled so industriously and long and with so loving an ambition, all the dearest souvenirs of earlier and brighter days, were now as a dead life to me. I placed them in a small wooden box, and with them buried all my hopes and ambitions. While waiting for some opportunity that heaven should render available for my determined but undirected will, I saw an advertisement for a nurse, to take charge of a little girl, and immediately decided to apply for the situation.

The long tresses that had often been called beautiful, I held a moment before my eyes, and with difficulty suppressing the memory of his praises as he had played with them, and struggling tears with which they came to me, I cut them off, and disguised myself with a dark plain braid of hair, in which my appearance was so changed I scarcely recognized myself.

My application was successful; I became an inmate of the house of Mrs. Wurth. When asked my name, I said it was Hagar; and without being questioned, without questioning—performing my duties without any fear or hope—I remained in this place until the child grew into womanhood.

In the meanwhile I heard often of your other sister, though for reasons which you may apprehend, there was little intimacy between her family and

that of her better educated and more fashionable niece, so that Mrs. Yancey had never seen me; and I heard of you, and sometimes of this isolated cottage in which I have been living.

I never saw my child again. The name of Mr. Warburton gradually became familiar to the world; he abandoned his profession—not in want of that success which should have more than satisfied his high reaching expectations, for he was master of a refined and touching eloquence, and thoroughly accomplished in all appropriate learning, so that fame waited surely on his patient endeavor; but that perhaps, I thought, some haunting memories beckoned him from a vocation in which he was too proud to appear without a conscious honesty. I have not ever doubted the sincerity of his belief in what he taught from the pulpit, or that his instincts were religious, but he ventured accommodations with conscience, and needed that bravery of nature which is the best security of virtue. He went abroad, and became a man of letters, and was fortunate. I read his books—in that hopeless, homeless life, and heard his old companions discuss his character and genius. How my heart warmed when I heard men praise him! and when ungenerous thoughts of him were spoken, with what difficulty I repressed the impulse to defend him! Though I had no expectation that I should ever see him,

though I knew he bore in his heart the cruelest feelings of injustice to me, I knew also that some times I was remembered, and with tenderness. And in all he wrote I saw that he was a wretched wanderer, an outlaw of his own mind—so that the poor servant who should have been his wife, did not envy him his triumphs, but with a subtler sense than others had of all the thoughts he gave the world, pitied him.

In the maturity of his life, and the fullness of his fame, he returned to his own country, and we walked again in the streets of the same city.

Catharine Wurth had grown to be a beautiful girl—

Half a woman, half a child,

and the love of her gentle and trustful heart had been almost entirely mine, and there was nothing else in the world so dear to me. Imagine, then, if it be possible, the torture which run through all my nature, when I saw this affection, this last solace of my life, weaned away from me, by him who once had been my lover, and my promised husband.

They met in society, and had been acquainted for weeks, perhaps for months, when I first met him at her house. I knew him instantly—changed as he was with griefs and years; but how should he know in the dark-haired Hagar, whom he saw

as one of the household of his expected bride, the young and blooming Elsie of long ago?

He was not more changed in person than in character. Yet there were signs still of the stern pride of former days, though it was subdued and silent, not assuming, ostentatious, and haughty.

Conscious of his powers and position, the fluctuations of opinion, praise, or censure, had no effect upon him.

Sometimes he talked with a gay air and apparent joyousness, but it was only a playing of the surface; all the while a quick observer might perceive that below was a sea heaving with irresistible and terrible currents—a sea which none who saw him ever could fathom.

There seemed about him always something unnatural, unreal; even when the circle in which he moved was captivated by his wit, or awed by the quickness and strength of his judgment, something that made one distrustful, and half afraid.

With a burning in my bosom, that was anger and sorrow, and jealousy, almost madness, I assisted in the bridal preparations, saw the sacred ceremonial of marriage, and was installed in the new home, not so much the pensioned companion as the confidante and dear friend of the young wife.

She, to her husband, was a beautiful toy, a pet, a bird of brilliant plumage and a sweet song—to

see or hear when he was weary of thought or of the outdoor world—but incapable of satisfying either his mind or his heart.

“Catharine,” I heard him say one morning, as she stood near me, while I pulled the yellow leaves from some flowers and loosened the earth about the roots; “my study, I wish you to remember, is sacred to myself; when I am within, it must be understood that I can never suffer any intrusion.” The wife laughed, as she replied, that she had no love for the monkish closet, and that even her woman’s curiosity should never tempt her to enter the place, especially after nightfall. I laughed too, and I suspect there was something of defiance in my tone and manner, as, with the yellow leaves in my hand, I walked past him, and entered the forbidden room.

“Where did you get that Hagar?” I heard him say, when I was out of sight. “There is something in her voice and laughter, sometimes, that disturbs me. You must dismiss her.”

In a moment afterward they entered the library together. It was furnished with exquisite taste, and the rich cases covering nearly all the walls were filled with the choicest books, which he had chosen to be his most intimate companions in an isolated middle age and in the decline of life. They did not notice me, and he proceeded in a gay man-

ner to exhibit to his wife the presentation copies of works he had received from famous authors, while abroad, and books curious for antiquity, or as specimens of art, and opening a cabinet, he displayed the souvenirs of his visits to many remarkable places, she listening all the while with a kind of childish pride and wonder, but I unmoved, though I felt the ashes that had been my heart disturbed, and a tremulous pain there, where I thought should be only insensible stillness and silence.

There was one drawer of the cabinet, in the centre, and larger than the others, which he did not open, and touching it with her fan, his wife said, "What is this? I wish to see all."

A sudden pallor came over his face, and he put his hand upon her arm and drew her away, saying hastily, "Nothing—nothing that will interest you—some old letters—papers—accumulations of years—nothing for you to see."

I thought I read the secrets of that drawer, as I marked the flush upon his cheek when he precipitately passed me, leading her from the room. As he turned back he motioned my withdrawal, and as soon as, mechanically, I passed the threshold, I heard the turning of the key that secured to him the secrecy he pined for in that solitude.

His wife, thus dismissed, retired with a light heart, to amuse herself with flowers or birds, or

the new novel, or her music, but I lingered near the door, and hearing soon a suppressed groan, I looked and saw him, before that secret drawer, which was slightly opened, on his knees, alternately in passionate prayer, and with unmoving lips, his face turned upward, with such repose of expression as seemed to evince madness, and heavy drops upon his pallid face—drops that were not tears.

There are hours, as Manfred said, all tortured into ages, which yet we can outlive. In the few weeks since first I knew he had returned, who can imagine the intensity of my anguish, the power of that great passion which had slept through years, to awake, under such circumstances, in the close presence of its object. Yet I was calm—I was very calm, as I turned away from observing how he too struggled with the past—so calm that I wondered, and placed my palm upon my brow to see if there was no throbbing there, and on my heart, to be assured it beat so slowly. It was true. I could have walked that moment, every nerve as tranquil as a sleeping child's, down from the blessed river which flows in Paradise, into the red and burning wastes of hell.

Another change awaited me; and whither should I go? I knew not. I was friendless, homeless, except in his home, where it was impossible to

remain. Heaven would not long uphold me if I voluntarily braved so terrible a danger.

I could not depart without possessing myself of that secret, which I felt was in some way connected with my own history, but in every effort I made to open the mysterious drawer I was baffled.

I did not avoid Warburton. Whatever the emotions awakened by my presence, he certainly did not know me, and probably had never in any way associated the names of Hagar and Elsie. But when we met I saw that there were fearful struggles in his heart, and felt that I was seeing God's retribution for the wrongs which I had suffered.

His wife, however, seemed insensible of his unhappiness, or if some moment he forgot his difficult but flimsy masque of peace, she had no doubt he would be restored to cheerfulness by some such poor resort as would have healed the deepest sorrow she herself had ever known. She came to me one morning with a face radiant with pleasant expectations, saying, "We are to have such a delightful time to-night! and I wish you to select the most becoming of all my dresses for me to wear."

"What do you propose?" I said.

"There is to be a splendid opera, with a new prima donna, and Mr. Warburton is to take me—we shall be so happy!"

I made every arrangement for her pleasure, but with an oppressive sense of melancholy and vague foreboding of terror that assured me the end of all this doubt, of this life I had been leading with so continual and painful an effort, was nearly accomplished. Mr. Warburton had seemed through the day unusually depressed and stern, and when on the approach of evening he came from a long seclusion in the library, not as if he dreamed of any joy, but with a countenance shaded in gloom, and restless glances, or fixed eyes that gazed on nothing, I could have flung my arms about him as he passed me, and said, Let me comfort you! with all your triumphs you are more wretched than I, and God pity you if you are more guilty! But my arms fell powerless beside me, and my lips were mute.

I had been alone, perhaps an hour, after their departure, when the resolved but undecided will which occupied my brain took shape, and I made instant preparation to leave the house forever. A trunk containing the few things of mine most necessary for my comfort, I had packed days before, in anticipation of some sudden emergency, and having confided it to a person from whom I could privately regain it whenever I should have another home, I went to my room for the little box in which were preserved the mementos of my youth—my drawings, and the elaborated pictures

he had gazed on, praising them, and the letters which had filled my heart one time with sweeter blisses than a century of common life would bring to me. As I was passing through the hall the key of the lock fell on the floor, and as I picked it up I observed that it was of a size and form perhaps to fit the lock of that drawer I had so anxiously and vainly sought to open. Stealthily, though no one could see me, I entered the library, applied it, succeeded, and in a moment the fearful enigma was revealed.

In a case of black and polished wood was a coffin, decayed, as if it had been buried many years; the lid was removed, and in it was a skeleton, which instinctively I recognized as my child; and from the accumulated dust, red beads glittered in the light of the close lamp. My heart seemed stiller than a grave, as I looked on and saw in the drawer beside these dread memorials of guilt and suffering, my picture, and the letters I had written when I was like it, young and beautiful, and seeing in the future vistas of flowers, and fairest skies perpetually serene—those letters, so full of love and confidence that had made me what I was, to that hour in which I stood there in the presence of such horrors, my forehead wet as with the crown of a murderess.

I know not whence I had the strength to do so,

but mechanically I lifted the fragile coffin in my arms, and pressed it to my heart, and on the skeleton I placed the letters, and the miniature, under which it crumbled, formless, which observing, a tear would have struggled to my face, but it was dried by the hot fire which burned intensely in my brain. I took up the lamp, and turning, saw a shadow on the wall, and in a moment, looking down upon me as from the dark, large shining eyes, so mournful that to have seen them might have taught the very stones to be pitiful.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALONE once more, and desolate now forever.

MRS. OSGOOD

How stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrow ! better I were distract :
So should my thoughts be severed from my grief,
And woes, by wrong imagination, lose
The knowledge of themselves.

SHAKESPEARE.

Alack, 'tis he ! why he was met even now
As mad as the next sea.

SHAKESPEARE.

HITHERTO, I had been near Warburton, stood beside him, studied him—unknown—as an unseen spirit.

“Elsie !” he said.

“Nathan !”

There was a long silence. His face grew white, and his thin lips moved, but he did not speak, and his eyes rested on me with such melancholy and reproachful tenderness, that remorse went burning down into my heart, as though mine had been all the guilt. I involuntarily and silently prayed, Have mercy on him, oh God ! whatever darkness be reserved for me ! I would have gone, but his arms reached toward me, and I had no strength to

execute my will. And if I had known that I was thus giving up my soul, in that moment I would not, I could not have prevented his embrace. That long and passionate kiss—but with lips so cold!—it quickened the flame smouldering for so many wretched years, and hereafter it will never go out.

“This—this is no phantom of a troubled brain—no such phantom as I have seen so often,” he whispered, as beneath his arms he felt the throbbing of my bosom: “look up, Elsie, dear Elsie, and tell me we shall never, never, never part any more;” and his low voice thrilled with a most touching tenderness and sweetness.

“I am Elsie—yes, I am Elsie—poor, degraded, so changed that you have not known me, all this while! but not yours—the hands of Innocence draw me away from you—not yours! it is too late, —your wife!”

“You are my wife—I have no other—can have no other. You are mine in all the fondest love—by the sacredest obligations—before God, in spite of men’s prohibitions. No—no—I see how it shall be—you are mine, and I married her, not knowing you were alive—that is it! I thought you were dead, and so I married her! And you will not—swear that you will not leave me,—this pent agony breaks out at last—and this curse of secrecy is

ended—ah, Elsie!—peace comes at length—but how late—how strange!”

My kisses brought no color to his cheek, but his eyes, seeming to shine with an unearthly lustre, looked steadily in mine with a beseeching tenderness, and his lips, slightly apart, ashen and cold, quivered with thoughts he could not shape in words, and in his hands he clutched mine with a fearful earnestness. Forgive me, All Merciful! if I failed to crush at once that love which thus revived; guilty, and ruined as it was, its broken and faded light was dearer and brighter than all that ever came down into the night from heaven. Regardless of the sinful horrors of the past, of the judgment to come, I look back on that hour of our reunion as on a rift of light between two seas of darkness. Oh, love! the crimson, widening from thy kiss, gives all their beauty to the roses and to the clouds; without thee all is blank—desolate.

Ages of torture and of bliss were lived by us in those few moments; we only felt that to be parted was to die; that our souls were interblended; that our thoughts could never be divided, nor stayed from wandering down that pathway which is bordered with fire. I felt, I knew, that with more fervor than ever before he loved me then, disrobed of the beauty and purity of my maiden years, dis-crowned of the golden glory which he saw about

my temples long ago, when he had praised my genius, and felt that his own nature in my presence was abased. He had himself sat on the barren cliffs of fame, drank till he had no more thirst, of praise, and now he could stoop and lift me from the dust, and feel that my simple love was more than all to him.

I had become reconciled to my own nothingness and oblivion, though I had not seen the star of that ambition which arose in the light of his praises, fade and go down, without regrets; it had burned long and sweetly before me, and it was hard to see it set, in quick and endless night. But with woman ambition is never a disconnected and single aim; she finds sometimes along the steeps to which it leads a bitter compensation for dear hopes, and sometimes with its flames she points the arrows of revenge; it is only when her heart is closed against all sympathies that her ambition dies; she cannot sift clear purposes and distinct aims from the impulses of feeling; she cannot think patiently down to the bottom of things, and separate and analyze and collect and build that which shall be only immortal; in the storehouse of her imagery there is no beauty unless associated with love; in the council chamber of her thoughts there is no absolute power; her ideas link themselves in one train, beginning in love and ending in death. She may

press her way through walls of thorns or of fire ; and the shadow of the laurel may sweep through her hair, but the triumph is for love's sake, in one way or another. In man's nature affection is as the ivy to the oak—in woman's it is the oak to the ivy. Therefore was my ambition dead.

It was the strangest and the saddest of the hours of my life. I only know that I gathered me about, as some consolation, the repeated assurances of his love—that my heart was broken anew with the consciousness of his suffering—that we met, and parted.

"I have tried," he said, "to assemble in my thoughts the crimes of all the world ; to slip from doom by losing myself among the thousands of guilty souls crowding, through life, and down to death, and up to judgment ; but over all there was one crime which made me eminent, so that every one could point to me and hail me as the Man ! Ah, dear Elsie, forsaken, but always loved ! cool for another moment with the dew of your kisses the fires that will at last consume me." And after a moment's silence, "The world is wide : let us fly together, and in each other's embrace defy what we cannot evade ; I feel even now the madness of my heart coming up to my brain ; if you go, you leave me to insanity and death, Elsie ;" and the melancholy and reproachful and tenderly-appealing pa-

those of his eyes burned through my bosom to my soul, as he continued, "Leave me not, dear one, beauty of my dreams, mother of my child!"

"Murderer!" I cried with a sudden horror; "let me go!" and escaping from his now unclasped and powerless arms, I took up the bones of my dead, and flew—alone—under the light of the midnight stars—along the hushed streets of the city.

Let me not lift the curtain from the remainder of that terrible night. I would that it were hidden forever from my memory. Walking, I heard the birds sing across the meadows, and presently the sounds of moving life, but from everything in nature I seemed struck apart. I tried to watch the shadows as they chased each other over the hills; to fix my thoughts on the oxen as they ploughed along the fields; but continually disordered recollections would sweep like crushing storms through all my consciousness; whatever I attempted, my mind in cloud and tumult would come still to the awful scene I had left; and men and women seemed to know a curse was on me, and to avoid me; and when the night came down again, wearied, and utterly desolate, bearing still that coffin pressed to my bosom, I saw in the darkness his glittering eyes looking into mine the agonies which he had suffered through so many years. Heaven, at length,

I felt, had withdrawn its high support, and I was drifting insensibly, hopelessly, toward the pit.

Agony of agonies, to live thus, to front the gloom and the torture, and not rush blindly to the grave, where no reproachful or distrustful eyes might see me any more, and no voice call me in the morning to take up the burden of life.

They are not the brave who die under the heavy pressure of pains and sorrows; there is courage enough in almost every one to give himself the sharp thrusts that should win freedom. At the sound of a trumpet hills are darkened with armies marching to death as to a triumph with flowers; uplifted by the sublimity of his sacrifice, one may become a martyr and sing of victory in a robe of flame: behind, the reverence of ages—before, the eternal shadowing of the wings of love; but the enthusiasm born of the loftiest passion is transient as the occasions of its necessity.

To live a martyr, with no supporting phrenzy; to see days rise and set, summers bloom and fade, the vigorous year break his fetters of ice, and sleep again under a shroud of snow; and through all changes fold the hands upon an empty, aching breast, knowing there is no peace this side the grave, and fearing to look beyond; no voice in all the world to say, I love you, love you more and more for the hate or scorn of others!—to live thus,

with an unfaltering will—ah! it is very hard. I almost wished as I crouched out of sight for rest by the wayside, that some sudden blow would crush me out of being. I looked at the waters, and thought how softly they would close above me and be still. But Gabriel, I knew, could find me in the sea!

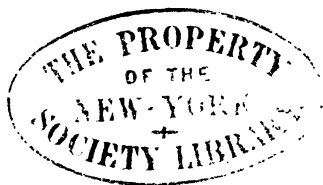
The evening of the second day I sat down by the roadside, under a tree, exhausted, wasted with sleeplessness and hunger. The deepest crimson of sunset was over the western woods; the gnats hummed faintly, and the ants worked busily in a little hill by my side, while a flock of sheep came nibbling the short grass almost up to my feet. Something of the tranquil influence of the time began to steal over me, when I observed, a short distance away, not far removed from the roadside, a dark and naked building surrounded by a wall, and looking closer, I perceived that the windows were grated, and I was thinking of the blessed life the prisoner might lead, thus shut from the cruel gazing of the world, if there were no haunting conscience still to trouble him, when a cloud of dust rose from the track of an approaching carriage, shaped like the dens for wild beasts that are drawn through the country on wheels; and looking intently at it as it passed, I saw a white face pressed against the bars, and eyes glaring like fire ———

it was Mr. Warburton, on his way to the mad-house!

You understand now why I turn from the fountain, and the white tent of innocence, to wander thirsty and alone in the desert. God bless you. Farewell.

Thus ended the MS. which Arnold held in his hand as he entered the church, that winter morning, to receive their greetings who had assembled for his bridal. The strange woman was never seen in the village again, but her neighbors still speak sometimes, on occasions of suffering and sorrow, of the good deeds of Hagar, the Penitent.

FINIS.



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